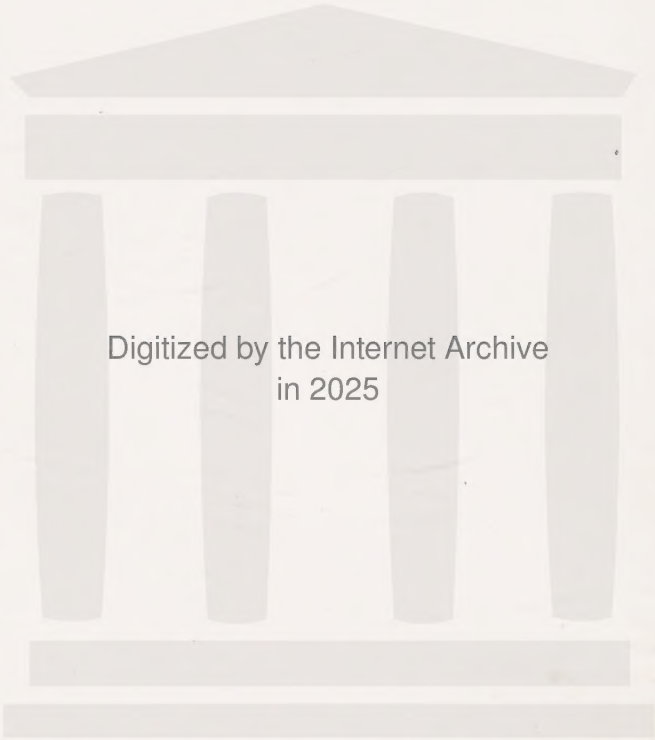
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A PAROCHIAL COURSE OF DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTIONS

FOR ALL SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS
OF THE YEAR

Based on the Teachings of the Catechism of the Council of Trent and Harmonized with the Gospels and Epistles of the Sundays and Feasts

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Archbishop of New York

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(*MORAL SERIES, VOL. I.*)

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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER, 20, 1921

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A PAROCHIAL COURSE OF DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTIONS

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SUBJECT

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

TEXT

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities.—ROM. xiii. 13.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. In to-day's Epistle St. Paul is admonishing the Roman Christians to fly the vices to which they had been addicted as pagans; and incidentally he sketches for us a picture of what the world was before the coming of Christ. Debauchery and moral corruption of all kinds had so settled down upon men that their lives, from an ethical viewpoint, were for the most part a veritable darkness even in the heart of the Roman Empire, the center of intellectual culture. St. Paul, therefore, charged his readers at Rome to be on their guard against the corruption around them, and to put on the armor of light, the shining virtues of Christ.

Most appropriately has the Church chosen this Epistle for our instruction to-day when we begin the season of preparation for the coming of our Redeemer at Christmas. Among the Christians of our time, even as among the pagans of the Apostle's age, there is a wide-spread indulgence of those lower vices which disgrace the name of Christian, dishonor the human body, and reduce man to the level of the beast.

I. What the sixth Commandment forbids: 1. This precept forbids not only adultery, but every act, look and word opposed to the virtue of chastity; in a word, it forbids all impurity, or inordinate carnal pleasure. 2. Impurity or lust is a mortal sin and

one of the capital vices, (a) because it is a beastly sin, subjecting the higher part of man to the lower brute passions; (b) because God has forbidden it and punished its commission with dreadful chastisements, such as the Deluge, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; (c) because it is universally considered a most shameful sin. 3. Impurity entails dreadful consequences, (a) unlike other sins which affect only one power, such as the intellect, the will, or some of the senses, lust contaminates man's entire being, body and soul, and becomes the one thought and aim of his existence; (b) it impels a man to every other kind of sin in order to gratify this one; from it result lying, slanders, thefts, murders, etc.; (c) impurity causes the loss of more souls than any other kind of sin, because, while it is the easiest to commit, it is perhaps the hardest to abandon, for it blinds the intellect, hardens the heart, leads to a disgust for piety, loss of faith, despair and final impenitence; (d) it causes the most loathsome diseases and more deaths than all the wars of history. The impure man's "bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust" (Job xx. 11).

II. What this precept commands: 1. The sixth Commandment requires all to cultivate chastity according to their state of life. 2. The excellence of this virtue is seen: (a) from the special love God bears it—He chose a virgin as His mother, the chaste St. Joseph as His foster father, and loved most among the Apostles the innocent St. John; (b) from the fact that God promises a special reward to the pure (Apoc. xiv. 3 ff.); (c) from the fact that, in consequence of purity, God grants special favors, such as, clearness of vision, peculiar taste for heavenly things, deep interior peace, etc.; (d) from the fact that it is called the *angelic virtue* (Wis. iv. 1). 3. The chief means of cultivating this virtue are: (a) prayer (Wis. viii. 21); (b) mortification, which consists in shunning idleness (Ecclus. xxxiii. 29), excessive eating and drinking (Ezech. xvi. 49), indecent conversation (Eph. v. 3), immodest dances, plays, etc., dangerous company keeping, bad books, immodest pictures, etc.; (c) frequent reception of the

Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion, meditation on the four last things, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

Exhortation. If the vice of impurity was an enormous crime for pagans, how much greater is it for Christians whose flesh has been honored by the Incarnation of the Son of God, whose bodies have been made the temples of the Holy Ghost, and who are nourished by the sacred Body and Blood of Christ Himself! 2. The night of paganism is past, the day of Christ is at hand; let us therefore put aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Sixth Commandment

Thou shalt not commit adultery.[1]

THE POSITION OF THIS COMMANDMENT IN THE DECALOGUE IS MOST SUITABLE

The bond between man and wife is one of the closest, and nothing can be more gratifying to both than to know that they are objects of mutual and undivided affection. On the other hand, nothing inflicts deeper anguish than to feel that the legitimate love which one owes the other has been transferred elsewhere. Rightly, then, and in its natural order is the Commandment which protects human life against the hand of the murderer, followed by that which forbids adultery and which aims to prevent anyone from injuring or destroying by such a crime the holy and honorable union of marriage—a union which is generally the source of ardent affection and love.

EXTREME CAUTION AND PRUDENCE NECESSARY IN THE EXPOSITION OF THIS COMMANDMENT

In the explanation of this Commandment, however, the pastor has need of great caution and prudence, and should treat with great delicacy a subject which requires brevity rather than

[1] Exod. xx. 14.

copiousness of exposition. For it is to be feared that if he explained in detail or at length the ways in which this Commandment is violated, he might unintentionally speak of subjects which, instead of extinguishing, serve rather to inflame corrupt passion.

As, however, the precept contains many things which cannot be passed over in silence, the pastor will explain them in their proper order and place.

TWO PARTS OF THIS COMMANDMENT

This Commandment, then, resolves itself into two heads: the one expressed, which prohibits adultery; the other implied, which inculcates purity of mind and body.[2]

WHAT THIS COMMANDMENT PROHIBITS: 1. ADULTERY

To begin with the prohibitory part of the Commandment, adultery is the defilement of the marriage bed, whether it be one's own or another's. If a married man have criminal intercourse with an unmarried woman, he violates the integrity of his marriage bed; and if an unmarried man have intercourse with a married woman, he defiles the sanctity of the marriage bed of another.

2. OTHER SINS AGAINST CHASTITY

But that every species of immodesty and impurity are included in this prohibition of adultery, is proved by the testimonies of St. Augustine and St. Ambrose,[3] and that such is the meaning of the Commandment is borne out by the Old as well as the New Testament. In the writings of Moses, besides adultery, other sins against chastity are punished. Thus the book of Genesis records the judgment of Judah against his daughter-in-law.[4]

[2] See 32. q. 4. c. meretrices, and other chapters in the same place; Amb., de Abraham, c. 4; 1 Jerome, contr. Jovin. lib. 1. & 2; in Galat. v, on the words: "Manifesta autem"; in Ephes. v. on the words: "Viri diligite"; Aug., de bono conjug. c. 16; lib. 22. contra Faust. cap. 47, 48; in quæst. Deut. p. 37. ad cap 23; Amb. in serm. on St. John which begins: "diximus superiore Dominica"; Greg., in Matt. lib. 32. c. 21; St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 100, a. 5; IIa IIae, q. 122. a. 6.

[3] Amb. lib. 1. officior. 1. c. 50. in fine. Aug. quæs. 71. super Exod.

[4] Gen. xxxviii. 14.

In Deuteronomy is found the excellent law of Moses, "that there should be no harlot amongst the daughters of Israel." [5] "Take heed to keep thyself, my son, from all fornication," [6] is the exhortation of Tobias to his son; and in Ecclesiasticus we read: "Be ashamed of looking upon a harlot." [7]

In the Gospel, too, Christ the Lord says: "From the heart come forth adulteries and fornications, which defile a man." [8] The Apostle Paul expresses his detestation of this crime frequently, and in the strongest terms: "This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication"; [9] "Fly fornication"; [10] "Keep not company with fornicators"; [11] "Fornication, and all uncleanness and covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you"; [12] "Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor sodomites shall possess the kingdom of God." [13]

But the reason why adultery is expressly forbidden is because in addition to the turpitude which it shares with other kinds of incontinence, it adds the sin of injustice, not only against our neighbor, but also against civil society.

Again it is certain that he, who abstains not from other sins against chastity, will easily fall into the crime of adultery. By the prohibition of adultery, therefore, we at once see that every sort of immodesty and impurity by which the body is defiled is prohibited. Nay, that every inward thought against chastity is forbidden by this Commandment is clear, as well from the very force of the law, which is evidently spiritual, as also from these words of Christ our Lord: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." [14]

These are the points which we have deemed proper matter for public instruction. The pastor, however, will add the decrees of the Council of Trent against adulterers, and those who keep harlots and concubines,[15] omitting many other species of immodesty

[5] Deut. xxiii. 17.
[6] Tob. iv. 13.
[7] Eccl. xli. 35.
[8] Matt. xvi. 19.
[9] 1 Thess. iv. 3.
[10] 1 Cor. vi. 18.
[11] 1 Cor. v. 9.
[12] Eph. v. 3.
[13] 1 Cor. vi. 9.
[14] Matt. v. 27, 28.
[15] Sess. 24. c. 24. de reform.

and lust, of which each individual is to be admonished privately, as circumstances of time and person may require.

WHAT THIS COMMANDMENT PRESCRIBES

We now come to explain the positive part of the precept. The faithful are to be taught, and earnestly exhorted, to cultivate continence and chastity with all care, to cleanse themselves "from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God." [16]

First of all they should be taught that although the virtue of chastity shines with a brighter lustre in those who make the holy and religious vow of virginity, nevertheless it is a virtue which belongs also to those who lead a life of celibacy; or who, in the married state, preserve themselves pure and undefiled from unlawful desire.

REFLECTIONS AGAINST IMPURITY

The holy Fathers have delivered many important lessons of instruction which teach us how to subdue the passions, and to restrain sinful pleasure. The pastor, therefore, will make it his study to explain these lessons accurately to the faithful, and will use the utmost diligence in their exposition.[17]

I. THE BASENESS OF IMPURITY

Of these lessons some consist in reflections, others in active measures. The remedy prescribed against sins of thought consists chiefly in our forming a just conception of the filthiness and evil of this sin; for such knowledge will lead one more easily to detest it. Now the evil of this crime we may learn from this reflection alone that, on account of it, man is banished and excluded from the kingdom of God—an evil which exceeds all others.

That calamity is, it is true, common to every mortal sin. But what is peculiar to this sin is that fornicators are said to sin

[16] 2 Cor. viii. 1.

[17] See St. Thomas, IIa IIae, q. 151. C. of Trent. Sess. 24. de matrim. c. 3; sess. 25. de regular.

against their own bodies, according to the words of St. Paul: "Fly fornication. Every sin that a man doth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body." [18] The reason is that such a one does an injury to his own body by violating its sanctity. Hence the Apostle, writing to the Thessalonians, says: "This is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God." [19]

Furthermore, what is still more criminal, the Christian who shamefully sins with a harlot makes the members of Christ the members of an harlot, according to these words of St. Paul: "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid. Or know you not, that he who is joined to a harlot is made one body?" [20] Moreover, a Christian as St. Paul testifies, is, "the temple of the Holy Ghost"; [21] and to violate this temple is nothing else than to expel the Holy Ghost.

2. THE INJUSTICE OF ADULTERY

But the crime of adultery involves that of grievous injustice. If, as the Apostle says, they who are joined in wedlock are so subject to each other, that neither has power or right over his or her body, but both are bound, as it were, by a mutual bond of subjection, the husband to accommodate himself to the will of the wife, the wife to the will of the husband; most certainly if either dissociate his or her person, which is the right of the other, from him or her to whom it is bound, the offender is guilty of an act of flagrant injustice, and of a grievous crime.[22]

3. THE DISGRACE OF ADULTERY

As dread of disgrace strongly stimulates to the performance of duty, and deters from the commission of crime, the pastor will also teach that adultery brands its guilty perpetrators with an indelible stigma. "He that is an adulterer," says Solomon, "for

[18] 1 Cor. vi. 18. [19] 1 Thess. iv. 3–5. [20] 1 Cor. vi. 15, 16.
[21] 1 Cor. vi. 19. [22] 1 Cor. vii. 4.

the folly of his heart shall destroy his own soul: he gathereth to himself shame and dishonor, and his reproach shall not be blotted out." [23]

4. THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF ADULTERY

The grievousness of the sin of adultery may be easily inferred from the severity of its punishment. According to the law promulgated by God in the Old Testament, the adulterer was condemned to be stoned to death.[24] Nay more, because of the criminal passion of one man, not only the perpetrator of the crime, but a whole city was destroyed, as we read with regard to the Sichemites.[25] The Sacred Scriptures abound with examples of the divine vengeance against this sin, such as the destruction of Sodom and of the neighboring cities,[26] the punishment of the Israelites who committed fornication in the wilderness with the daughters of Moab,[27] and the slaughter of the Benjamites.[28] These examples the pastor can easily make use of to deter men from similar enormities.

But even though the adulterer may escape the punishment of death, he does not escape the great pains and torments that often overtake such sins as his. Blinded by his own infatuation, the heaviest chastisement with which sin can be visited, he is lost to all regard for God, for reputation, for honor, for family, and even for life; and thus, utterly abandoned and worthless, he is undeserving of confidence in any matter of moment, and becomes unfitted to discharge any kind of duty.

Of this we find examples in the persons of David and of Solomon. David had no sooner fallen into the crime of adultery than he degenerated into a character the very reverse of what he had been before; from the mildest of men he became so cruel as to consign to death Urias, one of his most deserving subjects.[29] Solomon, having abandoned himself to the lust of women, abandoned the true religion to follow strange gods.[30] This sin, therefore, as Osee observes, often takes away man's understanding.[31]

[23] Prov. vi. 32. [24] Levit. xx. 10. John viii. 5. [25] Gen. xxxiv. 25.
[26] Gen. xix. 24.
[27] Num. xxv. 4.
[28] Judges xx.
[29] 2 Kings xi. and xii.
[30] 3 Kings xi.
[31] Osee iv. 11.

REMEDIES AGAINST IMPURITY: 1. AVOIDANCE OF IDLENESS

We now come to the remedies which consist in action. The first is studiously to avoid idleness; for, according to Ezechiel, it was by yielding to the enervating influence of idleness that the Sodomites plunged into the most shameful crime of criminal lust.[32]

2. TEMPERANCE

In the next place, intemperance in eating and drinking is carefully to be avoided. "I fed them to the full," says the prophet, "and they committed adultery."[33] An overloaded stomach begets impurity. This our Lord intimates in these words: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness."[34] "Be not drunk with wine," says St. Paul, "wherein is luxury."[35]

3. CUSTODY OF THE EYES

But the eyes, in particular, are the inlets to criminal passion, and to this refer these words of our Lord: "If thine eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee."[36] The prophets, also, frequently speak to the same effect. "I made a covenant with mine eyes," says Job, "that I would not so much as think upon a virgin."[37] Finally, there are on record innumerable examples of the evils which have their origin in the indulgence of the eyes. It was thus that David sinned,[38] thus that the king of Sichem fell,[39] and thus also that the elders sinned who calumniated the chaste Susanna.[40]

4. AVOIDANCE OF IMMODEST DRESS

Too much display and adornment in dress, which especially attracts the eye, is but too frequently an occasion of sin. Hence the admonition of Ecclesiasticus: "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up."[41] As women are given to excessive fondness for dress, it will not be unseasonable in the pastor to give

[32] Ezech. xvi. 49.
[33] Jerem. v. 7.
[34] Luke xxi. 31.
[35] Ephes. v. 18.
[36] Matt. v. 29, 30.
[37] Job xxxi. 1.
[38] 2 Kings xi. 2.
[39] Gen. xxxiv. 2.
[40] Dan. xiii. 8.
[41] Eccl. ix. 8.

some attention to the subject, and sometimes to admonish and reprove them in the impressive words of the Apostle Peter: "Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel." [42] St. Paul likewise says: "Not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire." [43] Many women adorned with gold and precious stones, have lost the only true ornament of their soul and body.

5. AVOIDANCE OF IMPURE CONVERSATION, READING, PICTURES

Next to the sexual excitement, usually provoked by too studied an elegance of dress, follows another, which is indecent and obscene conversation. Obscene language is a torch which lights up the worst passions of the young mind; and the Apostle has said, that "evil communications corrupt good manners." [44] Immodest and passionate songs and dances seldom fail to produce the same fatal effects, and are, therefore, cautiously to be avoided.

In the same class are to be numbered soft and obscene books which must be avoided no less than indecent pictures and images. All such things possess a fatal influence in exciting to unlawful attractions, and in kindling criminal desire in the mind of youth. In these matters the pastor should take special pains to see that the faithful most carefully observe the regulations of the Council of Trent.[45]

6. FREQUENTATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

If the occasions of sin, which we have just enumerated be carefully avoided, almost every excitement to lust will be removed. But the most efficacious means for subduing the violence of impure passion are frequent use of confession and communion. Unceasing and devout prayer to God, accompanied by fasting and alms-deeds, has a like salutary effect. Chastity is a gift of God: [46] to those who ask it aright He does not deny it; nor does He suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength.[47]

[42] 1 Pet. iii. 3. [43] 1 Tim. ii. 9. [44] 1 Cor. xv. 33.
[45] Sess. 25. decret. de invocat. et vener. sacr. imagin.
[46] 1 Cor. vii. 7.
[47] 1 Cor. x. 13. Tert., de Monog. at the end; Nazianz orat. 3; Basil., de virg., after the middle; Chrys. and Jerome on Matt. xvi.; Aug., lib. 6. confess c. 11.

7. MORTIFICATION

But the body is to be mortified and the sensual appetites to be repressed not only by fasting, and particularly, by the fasts instituted by the Church, but also by watching, pious pilgrimages, and other works of austerity. By these and similar penitential observances is the virtue of temperance chiefly manifested. In connection with this subject, St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says: "Every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one";[48] and a little after he says: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." And in another place he says: "Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscence."[49]

Sermons

Impurity a Terrible Evil

BY THE REV. JOHN W. SULLIVAN

Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.—Matt. v. 8.

INTRODUCTION

In reading this chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, you will notice that there are blessings, each different and peculiar in its kind, in store for the "poor in spirit," "the meek," "the mourners," "the merciful," "the peacemakers," "the just," "the patient," but none equal to that for "the clean of heart." "To secure the kingdom of heaven," "to possess the land," "to be comforted," "to have one's fill of God's justice," "to obtain mercy,' "to be called the children of God"—are not these great and glorious rewards? are not these privileges to be sought after? But "to see God"—to see Him who is the Maker of all things visible and invisible—this is the greatest of blessings, and this is reserved for "the pure of heart." To see Him *now* and to see Him hereafter—for this life and the next are the beginning and the continuation

[49] Rom. xiii. 14. [48] 1 Cor. ix. 25.

of one God-given life—this our infancy, that our maturity. The future will be but the more perfect doing and enjoying of what we do and enjoy here imperfectly. The pure heart sees God here, though imperfectly—"we see now through a glass in a dark manner," but then we shall see Him "as He is," "face to face."

To secure this goodliest portion of man's chief good, means a tremendous contest with the most subtle of enemies. To be "pure as Christ is pure," "to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," bespeaks a lifelong warfare against the flesh and the devil. The struggle with impurity is not new, the punishments meted out to the conquered are not modern—misery, disease, poverty, social ostracism to-day, hell to-morrow. Who would think that with so many terrible consequences staring them in the face there should be found so many to transgress? Many who have a horror of the sins of murder and injustice, are not so fearful of impurity; and yet this is as severely forbidden and from the beginning was more severely punished.

PUNISHMENTS IN THE PAST

Abominations of this class brought the deluge on the world to destroy not alone the sinners but even the creatures that were made for his use and service. The first flashes of that fire which shall one day purge the earth of all uncleanness were drawn from the heavens by the impurities of Sodom and Gomorrha. The Moabites feared for their safety, for they knew Israel was invincible while she remained obedient to God's commands. Therefore did they sacrifice their daughters' honor to the public weal. Israel succumbed to the temptation, and the lives of four and twenty thousand of her sons atoned, in one day, for the sin. Did not the land of Canaan spue forth its inhabitants because impure rites and incest made their extermination a necessity, lest they should breed a moral pestilence? Why did the prophet break the tablets of the covenant, and arm brothers to take vengeance on their nearest and dearest, but for the lewdness that accompanied the worship of the golden calf? So licentious were the profanations which the wickedness of King Manasses wrought in the holy places and brought in as a flood on Jerusalem, that God

declared He would bring evils on Jerusalem and Juda "that whosoever shall hear of them, both his ears shall tingle" (4 Kings xxi. 12). Onan defiled the marriage-bed by a sin of lust, and, therefore, "the Lord slew him because he did a detestable thing." Overcome by lust of the flesh the wise Solomon became foolish, the strong Sampson grew weak, and the holy David was sin-stained. When our Lord visibly entered the warfare, during His earthly ministry, the adulterous character of the generation elicited His severest rebukes—"this is an evil and adulterous generation." No; the struggle is not new and God knows that it is not light nor its victims few. To what a lamentable condition this terrible sin reduced a place like Corinth, we may judge from one of St. Paul's Epistles, and what dread havoc it wrought at Rome, we may infer from fearful passages in another. The writings of poets, satirists and historians, the sights we see around us daily and on all sides, our own personal experiences tell too plainly and too sadly the course of this capital sin and its dire effects.

FUTURE MALEDICTIONS

The power of God is not limited nor is His arm shortened. Appalling as have been the visible scourges with which His wrath has chastised directly the impure in this life, severe and dreadful beyond measure are the woes denounced against them in the hereafter. "Fornicators and adulterers," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "God will judge," and "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "They shall not possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 9). How can they since, as St. Paul declares, "they have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. v. 5)? "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented, and especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness" (2 Peter ii. 9, 10). Reserve them? For what? St. John answers: "They shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Apoc. xxi. 8). To them is promised not the vision of God, there is another portion, another vision—that of the worm and the outer darkness where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—dark-

ness rendered blacker by the one brief but bright sight of their Judge surrounded by the dazzling glory of heaven—darkness rendered more painful by that sense of loss which comes upon them with the irrevocable sentence, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels,"—darkness rendered more terrible by the personal presence of him who brought them into it by the haunting words: "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Apoc. xxii. 11).

PRESENT EVILS

Some of these terrible evils have been visited upon the impure in the past, some await them in the future. They may be, alas! too faint and far-distant to spur us on to virtue or to check us in vice. But the monster of impurity has wages, and very bitter wages in the present, wages that are paid in soul, in mind, in body, in social life; wages that are paid with stern justice to the very last penny.

This sin destroys holiness, impedes the workings of grace, it weakens reason, turns one wholly to sense, making him brutish, stupid, insensible. It disrupts domestic affections, robs man of his truest joys, runs on for life and is scarcely, if ever, shaken off. Why should not the love of youth be elevated by the desire to reproduce the happy homes of childhood's memory, why should not sisters be the ideals of modesty to brothers, why should not children be edified by the unbroken harmony of parents? There is no reason why but the workings of that foul sin. No crime enslaves man more than that of impurity. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man he finds no rest, no ease till he returns. Not content with returning himself, he brings along seven other spirits more wicked than himself. The sinner's soul becomes the rendezvous of this horde, and the last state of this man is worse than the first. No crime involves man in greater misfortune mentally, morally and socially. No crime is more shameful, more productive of the insupportable sting and remorse of conscience. What is first done from frailty is soon committed with full consent and deliberation, and he who falls with anguish and remorse, in the end becomes a hardened sinner. Justly is it numbered among the seven capital sins, for it is the seminary of numberless

other vices, of endless evils and is an unremitting enemy of salvation. It is, of all the sins to which we are prone, the most pernicious and destructive, the most filthy, the most abominable in God's sight. "From its fruits you shall know it."

I. SPIRITUAL EVILS

As soon as impurity has been admitted it fatally propagates itself. It is much like drifting—a quiet, still, unnoticed, perpetual influence ever pulling in one direction, loosening one strand then another until the anchor is uprooted and the vessel, rudderless, pilotless, chartless, is left at the mercy of the waves. It affects parts of the being seemingly most remote from the original mischief. The soul becomes insensible to God and the things of God; as the Apostle has it: "The sensual man does not perceive the things that are of the spirit of God" (1 Cor. ii. 14). Man who was once made in the image of God, made for himself gods in his own image. Is it not a truth that the more defective are the qualities within us, the more defective are our conceptions of the relationships around us, and the more imperfect must be our ideas of God? The gods of the heathen were impersonations of the qualities of their own nature; for as the evil passions of fallen man are stronger than the good, they naturally became the most prominent features in his ideal of a god who was like himself. Fearfully does the pagan mythology, in the light of these truths, testify to the impurity of the heart from which was drawn their notion of God. Every evil passion and baser appetite took its place in their heaven and had its altars upon earth. What we long for most, what we look to most, that is our heaven! Whatever we bow down to most, whatever we worship most, that is our god! What idea of a God of purity can he have, then, whose nature is cruel, selfish and impure? What conception of God has he who has so debased his moral nature as to be incapable of understanding or loving the better and higher natures of his fellowmen? Is it not such a one that God Himself rebuked, saying: "Thou thoughtest unjustly that I should be like to thee" (Ps. xlix. 21)? Is not the God of that man, if he thinks of God at all, as much an idol, as much the God of his own impure and depraved imagination, as ever was the god of the heathen? A

man's ideas of God must depend in a great measure on what he is himself. The light that beams pure and bright from the throne of the Almighty takes the hue of the moral atmosphere through which it passes. God Himself has told us, through the Psalmist, that with the holy He will be holy still, with the innocent He will be innocent still, and with the perverse He will be perverse. (Ps. xvii).

If the God above is not spotless in their sight, how can men like themselves be pure? He whose ideas of love, goodness and purity have fallen below the standard of human excellence believes, and must believe, that those around him are similarly blemished. How can it be otherwise? "To them that are defiled nothing is clean, both their mind and the conscience are defiled."

Inward purity! Whoever that is stained has ascribed that to mortal man? "Out of the unclean heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," and the jaundiced eye of his spirit invests everything with the hue of its own disease. What to him who will not "flee youthful lusts" are the natural affections of home, the innocence and simple pleasures of childhood, the reverence for old age and its crown of glory? What, to him who will not cleanse a heart that has become the source and font of defilement, are the ties and endearments of family and friends? What, to him from whom proceed evil thoughts, adulteries and fornications, are the sweet sister, the helpful wife, the mother of children, but spotted and stained creatures like himself? What value can he set upon the beautiful in nature, the lovely in virtue, the sublime in wisdom, the mysterious in grace? With eyes overclouded, polluted eyes, he sees not, "for unto them that are defiled nothing is pure."

Each class of sin has its own results. Drunkenness has its train of poverty, blurred intellects and weakened bodies. Pride avenges itself by the isolation in which it leaves a man. Murder fears where there is no fear, makes a coward of the brave. Impurity punishes its victims by making entire recovery almost impossible, by creating an appetite which it is mortal sin to satisfy and agony to refuse, by sadly and painfully emphasizing the law that sins committed in the body are punished in the body.

2. MORAL CONSEQUENCES

How frequently is the wicked plea made, and even admitted, that one more transgression, another and another, will make matters no worse! One more and then I shall be pure. Oh, how interminable is the distance between the impure heart, in its present state, and that holiness without which no man shall see God! What mountains and mountains of difficulty lie between purity and impurity! It is not one sin that must be laid aside, not one act of fornication or one adultery that must be stopped, it is the seven unclean spirits, who have entered in with the devil of fornication or of adultery, that must be driven out. It is not one act nor one sin that must be conquered, but a natural tendency which your acts have abused and whose power they have fatally strengthened. The whole tide of thought energized by indulgence must be turned back again, the fountain and the stream must be made pure. Imagination, which has run riot in its revels, is to be restrained; desires, given the free wing of the winds, must be checked; affections that have grown strong in the unhampered exercise of lust are to be converted and purified. Then, with a realization of the difficulty of the task, the sense of impossibility takes hold—that chill breath of the iceberg that has so often checked many a warm aspiration after purity. We may fly from the world and from the devil, but we cannot fly from the flesh. This domestic enemy is so closely interwoven with corrupt nature, that nothing but an extraordinary grace can move us to repent it, nothing but death can totally destroy it.

3. BODILY AFFLICTIONS

Warnings conveyed by the silent but sure approach of God's judgments, how are they accepted? That emaciated body, those trembling hands, that lack-luster eye, that moody solitariness, those shattered nerves, those withered affections, those keen but secret pains, the disappearance of youthful promise, the sense of utter loneliness, of degradation and stain, of fear lest everyone must know or notice the defilement, the inability of the heart to bestow itself in chaste, modest, pure affection—yea, and those still more vile and painful afflictions the very names of which are as

revolting as they themselves—are these taken as warnings from God? Is not some other reason, and not the true one, given or accepted for these awful punishments in the body for the sins committed in the body? Have the words of Holy Scripture any meaning for the impure: "A young man, according to his way, will not depart from it when he grows old" (Prov. xxii. 6)? Do they believe the saying of Bacon that "the debauches of youth are conspiracies against old age" and that "one pays dearly in the evening for the follies of the morning"?

Impurity is a sin which will always abound; men will ever have to strive with the natural uncleanness of the human heart; there will ever arise an unwholesome curiosity to lift the veil which God's order draws. There will always be a difficulty in attaining the mastery over appetite, in becoming not like the brute, coarsely gratifying its lusts, but like the restored man, denying himself, bridling himself when indulgence is unlawful. The dread examples which Scripture gives of its evil consequences, the abnormal idea of God, the horrible suspicion of others it engenders, the shattered body and the benumbed mind can scarcely check its advances once it is admitted.

4. SOCIAL EVILS

At the very foundations of society it works with fatal results. What a terrible evil that which robs our youth of their blooming health, saps their promising maturity, dims their clearness of mind, soils their innocence of soul! How one single boy, careless of speech or hard in conduct, flings a poisonous seed abroad on the air, which may seem to fly away, as the wind, out of sight, but settles down somewhere and then springs up and bears plant and flower and fruit of sin in another soul! How terrible the evil that permits one boy or one girl to corrupt secretly or openly an entire neighborhood, a whole school! That suffers one agent to open the gates of a degenerate nature and drown the innocent in a flood of foul waters!

How repulsive it is in its true colors, how revolting it sounds when called by its true names, which we dare not mention! Conscious of this, its victims shrewdly veil it under false colors and call it by names that may not shock unsuspecting ears. And yet

though the world excuses the vice and tries to pass it off as a harmless pleasure, it still remains true that every man, even the sinner, despises the impure in heart. Who will receive into his home that sower of immorality, the smiling villain who is known to pour his vile suggestiveness into innocent ears, who is known to revel with the daughters of shame in the homes of Satan? Trust the sea with your tiny boat, trust fickle winds, trust the miser's generosity, the tyrant's mercy, but trust not the artful scoundrel armed with obsequience for your pride, praise for your vanity, generosity for your selfishness, words of religion for your conscience, spicy scandal for your curiosity. None that go with him return again. What chance has she who has listened to her own vanity, then to the flattery of others, and finally sold her jewel of great price? Conscience may ply her scorpion-whip, there may be repentance, bodily suffering, but the door of return is forever shut and the inner voice cries out, "Thou art dishonored, thou art stained, thou art lost." The lovelier the thing is, the more hopeless, the more lamentable its ruin. This sin ruins that which God planned to be so lovely—the sister, the ideal of purity to her brothers; the gentle, loving wife; the tender, devoted mother—yet the ruin of all this, all this forfeited for the short career of profligacy, short as the life of a moth! What mysteries, what blessings, what joys does this vice break in upon and desecrate! Were it not that St. Paul warns us that these things should not be so much as mentioned, I might refer you to the accounts of our criminal courts; I might advise you to read the scandalous reasons advanced for numberless divorces; I might mention that one of the gravest charges against our boodling officials is that they accept an income for the protection of this blackest of crimes. What misfortunes, terrible and lasting, it begets! Homes disrupted, whole lives ruined, hearts broken, souls lost—and for what? "A heinous crime, a grievous iniquity, a fire that devoureth even to destruction and rooteth up all things that spring" (Job xxxi. 11, 12).

"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." Can this ever be the case with the impure? Sensuality, in all its shapes, is ever selfish, cruel, malignant—the enemy of love. So Ammon discovered, when he had accomplished his guilty purpose on his

sister Thamar: "So that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her" (2 Kings xiii. 15). So David discovered when the sight of the accomplice of his sin, who had been the occasion of yet deeper sin, recalled to him with agony whose she once had been, and when the news of the war flashed before his eyes that phantom form of his noble mighty one, placed by his orders where the battle was hottest, faithful unto death to him, the faithless. So she discovers who murders the innocent consequences of an unholy love, to conceal her sin, or the unconscious legitimate result of the God-ordained institution of marriage. She has sounded the deepest depths of sin, sacrificed an immortal soul for a mess of pottage.

SOME CAUSES OF IMPURITY

Look around you, you need not look far to see the horrors of this social evil. Think of the many who come to be united in marriage and who should come as penitents. Think of the results that accrue from the very suggestiveness of our penny arcades, our theatrical posters, the flippant, fearless expose of the most delicate subjects by our theaters, our publications, our newspapers. Think of the open, shameless presence of fallen women in our streets, filled with a hellish readiness to entice others to follow them in the ways of sin. Consider that these human instruments are doing the works of demons, entrapping innocent girls, prowling about homes, shops and hospitals, offering pretended kindness and alluring to sham homes. Remember there are cities in this country of ours where the worst of traffics has become a vested interest. Think of her who teaches her unsuspecting sister the trick of infanticide. Think of your own sinful carelessness in not properly guarding your daughters against what not only might be but are occasions of sin in their own homes. Your young sons whose battles are, of all, the most difficult, are left unwarned and unprotected when the worst of temptations have commenced the struggle, when men, criminally even if heedlessly, are putting into their hands circulars or pamphlets they should never read. Reflect on some of these things for a moment; they will bring up many more terrible evils that will

make you wonder that the waters of the sea do not rise again or the flames that destroyed the cities of the plain do not flash.

CURES FOR IMPURITY

But thank God there are still brave, courageous men, chaste women, family affections, the blossoms which still bloom on the desecrated temple. There are still to be found even the ten just men, who will save the world and see God, men who are not only outwardly, but inwardly, pure of heart. The source of the evil is the heart, for out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications. Christ went to the root of the matter when He said: "Blessed are the pure of heart." The cure must begin at the heart. See to your hearts first, suffering no unclean imagination to harbor within, training yourselves to habits of self-control in all things. Unchaste thoughts unchecked are like serpents' eggs, which the warmth of feelings hatches in bosoms. Crush them at once or cherish the viper in your heart and be safe if you can. It is against thoughts that we have primarily to guard (Matt. xv. 18). If the heart is pure—then are the lips, the hand, the life, like a stream from a fountain. Defile your lips with no words unbecoming the sanctity of a child of God. Read no publications that may inflame or defile you—better they should perish in the flames than that you should be cast into hell. Prayer, mortification, confession, are preventives for all and remedies for those who have fallen, for those who have wallowed in sin. It is easy for sensual, comfort-loving people of the world to scoff at these things, but hard names are not arguments, and abuse of the spiritual necessities does not destroy the obligation of observing them. Then, too, we have Jesus, our exemplar—"even as He is pure." He came to purify us by His own purity, to be the fountain where we may wash and be clean. By His help we may be *made* pure, for He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

CONCLUSION

When you are contracting habits of impurity you are dealing most fearfully with spiritual things, you are ruining your body,

the temple of the Holy Ghost; you are weakening your will, tightening thin cords into the iron chain of habit. The temptations are sore and grievous, you carry the evil about you in the very body wherewith you are clothed. Yet if it be hard to stand firm against temptation, it is ten times harder, with tainted imagination, vitiated memory, and weakened will, to rise once you have fallen. It is harder to rise, for you may reach that state where the body refuses to respond but the mind continues to desire. It is harder because the same motives that persuaded you to lose your innocence will dissuade from repentance. Impurity is Satan's deadliest weapon against you. Impurity of every kind, deliberate in word, thought or deed, is a mortal sin. But if the temptations are the strongest that beset you, if the evil results of yielding are the most terrible that befall you—so also is the reward; there is none greater.

"With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth not from it" (Prov. iv. 23). Let purity, like Eliseus, sit at the fountain head and heal the unwholesome waters, putting sweet for bitter, ministering good thoughts, holy desires, pure affections, heavenly love, goodly deeds, then you will be pure of heart and yours will be the reward "to see God."

Holy Purity

BY THE REV. THOS. P. PHELAN, LL.D.

I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service.—Rom. xii. 1.

DIGNITY OF HOLY PURITY

Man's body was made from the slime of the earth and one day will return again to the dust from which it was formed. Yet St. Paul tells us that the body is the temple of God in which dwells the spirit of the Most High, and must be preserved from defilement: "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1 Cor. iii. 17). The Creator conferred on man a soul, made to His own image and likeness, endowed with the three properties—will, memory and understanding. The body is the corruptible vessel in which the soul is imprisoned until the day

of deliverance comes. Yet it shares with the soul the many graces and blessings of God. The waters of Baptism lave its brow; Holy Chrism sanctifies it; Penance strengthens it against concupiscence; the Body and Blood of the Lord nourish it; the blessings of Matrimony conquer its carnal desires; the Holy Oils consecrate its fleshly hands to the service of the Altar; the Last Anointing purifies its sinful members. On the day of days the soul will be united to it once more, not in its original corrupted state, but spiritualized and glorified. Together they will live for all eternity, either in the infernal abyss of the wicked or in the glorious triumph of the children of God.

DEGRADATION OF IMPURITY

In the Decalogue God warned His chosen people against the sins of the flesh: "Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." Not only the actual commission of sin was forbidden, but also all indulgence in sinful thoughts and desires. Christ repeated these warnings and amplified and explained them: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you whosoever look on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. v. 27, 28). Society admires outward decency, yet it condones interior corruption. The Church, teaching the doctrines of Christ, demands internal and external sanctification in mind and heart. Exterior purity alone is similar to the justice of the Pharisees: "You are likened to whitened sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness" (Matt. xxiii. 27, 28). Modern cynicism endeavors to palliate these excesses by natural and social arguments. Budding years, young manhood require certain illicit pleasures, happily designated as frivolities and irregularities of youth. He must taste these delights, otherwise life would be a failure. Grey hairs and impaired vigor will show him the error of his conduct, and the continence of old age will compensate for the offenses of earlier years. Yet the Lord makes no distinction of age or sex, in condemning these moral delinquencies. All are contrary to His commandments, all are in violation of the teachings of His Only-begotten Son, all dishonor

man's body, the temple of the Holy Ghost, all disfigure his soul, created to the image and likeness of the Creator, all lead him to eternal damnation.

CONSEQUENCES OF IMPURITY

Sins of the flesh have always been severely punished by the Lord. The wickedness of their sons brought fire and brimstone from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrha and destroyed these cities of the plains, despite the prayers and petitions of Abraham. The desolation of the land and the noisome exhalations of the salt sea are living witnesses to their frightful punishment. Onan, the son of Juda, disobeyed his father and brought dishonor on himself, and the Lord in indignation slew him. His name and sin are forever perpetuated by those who imitate his crimes. David, the king, forgot the lessons of his youth, and committed adultery and murder. God spared him, because of his past virtues and his sincere penance. Yet his beloved son died a violent death, a rebel against his authority, and his kingdom was cleft in twain and condemned to ultimate ruin. The Christian who defiles his body and corrupts his soul, earns God's condemnation and punishment in time, and merits eternal damnation in eternity.

MEANS OF PRACTISING PURITY

God has not left His creatures helpless in this carnal warfare. He has equipped them with weapons to resist the attacks of the foe. "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi, 41), was the advice He gave His Apostles when they slept in the garden, and He addresses the same warning to His suffering children. There are many proximate, voluntary occasions which lead them into sin. They must shun every object, pursuit, amusement and association of sin if they hope to remain unstained. "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it" (Ecclus. iii. 27). Natural virtue is not sufficient, they need supernatural grace. Prayer is the first and most opportune remedy. By it God's aid may be solicited at all times and in all places, when other and greater means of sanctity are unavailable. The frequent and earnest reception of Penance and Holy Eucharist

are the most efficacious antidotes against temptation. In the sacred tribunal, they behold sin in all its heinousness. The grace of Christ flows into their souls and they go forth contrite for past delinquencies, sincere in the purpose of future amendment. The Body and Blood of the Saviour cleanses and purifies them and heals their imperfections, as virtue went out of Him of old when the afflicted touched the hem of His garment. With Jesus guarding the citadel of the heart, they need fear no attack. Confidence in God's help, vigilance in daily life will be the handmaids to lead them from the city of confusion and the house of bondage to the land flowing with milk and honey, the home of Him who is styled, "The Crown of Virgins."

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For a complete treatment of the Liturgy see *Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. IV.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

SUBJECT

THE FIRST PART OF THE HAIL MARY

TEXT

And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women.—Luke i. 28.

Analysis

Introduction. The first part of the **Hail Mary** is made up of the greetings addressed to our Lady on the days of her Annunciation and Visitation. It was the Archangel Gabriel, the ambassador of heaven to earth, that saluted the holy Virgin on the former occasion, and her cousin Elizabeth who, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, greeted her on the latter. These two divine salutations are joined together and are used by the faithful as a tribute of praise and gratitude to God for the wondrous privileges He has conferred on Mary, and as an expression of felicitation to her on the many and singular blessings of which she has been the object. Since the Immaculate Conception, whose feast we celebrate to-day, was the first of Mary's prerogatives, it is most fitting that we should briefly meditate on those words of praise and thanksgiving that constitute the first part of he **Hail Mary** and that daily and hourly ascend, like sweet incense, to our Lady's throne in heaven.

I. The Salutation of Gabriel. 1. "Hail," or "Peace be to thee," is a word of greeting. It is often used in the Orient, and indicates the wish that one may be at peace with God. Here it expresses our joy over Mary's privileges, our thanksgiving to God for His graces to her, and our congratulations to the holy Virgin herself. 2. First eulogy: "Full of grace." These words signify: (a) our Lady's immunity from all sin: (b) the copious measure of grace and supernatural gifts bestowed on her; (c) the extraordinary

merits by which she constantly increased in holiness and the divine favor. The fulness of grace given to Mary, while far below that of her divine Son, immeasurably surpassed that of all the angels and saints. Since her office and dignity as Mother of God were superior to those of any other mere creature, it was becoming that in her spiritual endowments she should likewise be more excellent than all others. 3. Second eulogy: "The Lord is with thee." The meaning of these words is that the Blessed Virgin possessed the divine friendship and protection in an especial manner throughout her entire life; they do not mean that she was already the Mother of God, which she became only after she had given her consent to the angel's announcement.

II. **The Salutation of Elizabeth.** 1. Third eulogy: "Blessed art thou among women." This salutation was uttered first by the angel and later by St. Elizabeth; it means that the Blessed Virgin was favored by God above all other women, (a) because she possessed a higher degree of grace than others; (b) because she was especially loved and protected by God throughout her life; (c) because unlike Eve, who brought sorrow to the world, Mary brought gladness and joy; (d) because among virgins she was a Mother, and among mothers she was a virgin; (e) because she was especially prepared to become the Mother of God. This singular divine blessing expressed by St. Elizabeth has been repeated by the faithful throughout the ages. 2. Fourth eulogy: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb." This is a tribute of praise directed to Mary's divine Son, whose dignity and measure of grace exceeded that of all mankind (Philip. ii. 9); indirectly, however, this eulogy redounds to the Blessed Mother, just as the excellence of the fruit indicates the quality of the tree (Luke xi. 27).

Lessons. 1. When saying the **Hail Mary** we should be mindful of our debt of gratitude to God who in the Blessed Virgin has so singularly honored our race and conferred upon us so many and such great blessings: through her came the Redeemer and all the benefits of redemption. 2. We should also frequently repeat

this prayer as a tribute of honor and thanksgiving to Mary. There are no words of praise which could be more acceptable to her, since they recall the happy event of her becoming the Mother of God.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

(See Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermon

The Hail Mary

BY THE REV. C. BRUEHL, D.D.

Hail! full of grace!—St. Luke i. 28.

INTRODUCTION

My dear friends, the Hail Mary has a charm of its own. It throws a sweet spell over our souls and goes straight to our hearts. There is a note in it which calls forth an echo in every Catholic breast. We will not try to analyze it; but we will surrender ourselves to its holy influence and magnetic power. Heaven and earth have united in forming this beautiful prayer. It is fragrant with the perfume of the angelic lips of Gabriel, who first pronounced this tender salutation; it is redolent with the holy breath of St. Elizabeth, who, in enraptured ecstasy took up the heavenly strain of the archangel and added to it words of exquisite melody; it is vocal with the murmurs of the myriads who have devoutly repeated this hallowed prayer throughout the ages. Pick up a tiny shell on the sands of the seashore and hold it to your ear; the voices of the deep, the mysterious songs of the waves, all the harmonies of the vast, great ocean speak from the hollow of that neatly chiseled bowl. Thus the voices of heaven and earth, the melodious words of men and angels, the suppliant cries of saints and sinners are blended in the sweet harmony of the Hail Mary. Aye, it is a great prayer. And more than that it is a prayer which we dearly love. It drops as dew from our lips. It is enshrined in the innermost sanctuary of our hearts, balmy with the fondest memories of our first childhood. We

learned it from our mother. And her kind smile, and the soft accents of her voice, that now is hushed, and the mellow light of devotion gleaming in her eyes, that have closed in death; this all is bound up forever with the Hail Mary we daily recite. But above these visions of the past rises a fairer vision, wrapped in celestial splendor and glory: the image of our heavenly Mother, to whom we address the prayer, which we have learned from our earthly mother. Ah, we are not surprised at the subtle charm of this wonderful prayer and its magic power over our hearts!

Nor will we marvel, when we are told of its extraordinary efficacy as a prayer and a means of grace. It embodies all the elements of a good and strong prayer, and many have experienced and loudly proclaimed its well nigh infallible efficacy and irresistible force. The secret of the power of the Hail Mary lies in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. As powerful, as widely extended, as reliable and efficacious, as is the intercession of the Blessed Mother, so powerful and efficacious is the Hail Mary; for it is especially and principally through the Hail Mary that we obtain and secure the intercession of our Blessed Lady. There is no prayer that will render the Mother of God so propitious to us, so ready to hear our petitions, so willing to take into her own spotless hands our cause, and to plead on our behalf with her divine Son, as the Hail Mary. It is the golden key to her maternal heart. It gains the ear and the good will of the Blessed Lady for us and makes us sure of her powerful intercession. We will try to understand why the Hail Mary has such a power over the heart of our Blessed Mother, and, hence, why it is for us such an unfailing means of grace and inexhaustible source of heavenly favors. We find the explanation in its threefold character; the Hail Mary being a prayer of praise, of thanksgiving and of petition. And in each one of these qualities it is unsurpassed and unrivaled.

A PRAYER OF PRAISE

Before we can propose our petitions and explain our wants to the Blessed Virgin, we must gain her ear and attract her attention. This is accomplished by the first part of the Hail Mary, which contains a salutation and the praise of the Blessed Mother. We salute our Lady by the same words by which the archangel hon-

ored her. They must fall agreeably upon the ears of Mary, as the lingering echoes of a dear voice. And then we extol her greatness. We praise her. Praise is the tribute we pay to excellence. It is not flattery. Flattery comes from a mean and selfish heart. Praise flows from a generous and noble soul. Love has praise, Envy never praises; it belittles and censures. A noble soul despises flattery; but it accepts sincere and honest praise. And so does our Mother delight in the praise of her children. It sounds sweet to her ears. That praise which we bestow on our Mother in the Hail Mary is not exaggerated, not pompous, not obtrusive. It has the ring of sincerity. It proceeds from our love of the Blessed Virgin and from our admiration of her virtues. It is filial praise; sober, yet glowing with the warmth of affection. It is couched in a few words, it is rich in meaning.

"Full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke i. 28). What more could we say; yet how could we say it with less pretension? These few words recall the great privileges of Mary, gratuitously conferred on her by God, and also her personal merits. Our Blessed Mother loves to hear what God has done for her; she herself chants not her own glory, but the grandeur of God: "He that is mighty hath done great things for me: and holy is his name" (Luke i. 28). But God has lavished His graces on Mary; and He has given her the choicest and finest graces. He has given her a purity of immaculate brightness, as that of a star elevated far above the dust of the earth. He has not given her a measure of grace but the very fulness of grace. He has heaped upon her His gifts and exhausted the treasures of His bounty. But even more. Not only God's gifts fill the heart of Mary; nay, the Lord dwelleth there Himself. His power overshadows her. His luminous presence surrounds her. The rays of His divinity penetrate her. She feels His wonderful nearness. Her heart leaps with joy, more so than that of John, who also felt the thrill of the divine Presence. Mary was the living tabernacle, where God made His abode. And, truly, God was with her. He was with her as a helpless babe, when she clasped Him to her loving bosom; He was with her as a growing child, when she held His little hand and guided His faltering steps; and He was with her when she held the lifeless form of His bruised body in her arms;

He was with her in life and in death. But our Blessed Lady was also with God. Never did she separate herself from Him. Her thoughts were with God. Her will was united to His. Her heart burned with everlasting love for Him. And she might well cry out, with St. Paul: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vii. 38, 39). Mary deserves our praise. St. Ambrose exclaims: "Mary, ever Virgin, is the greatest wonder of God. Who has ever been more holy than Mary? She surpasses in sanctity the prophets, the Apostles and Martyrs, the angels, the thrones, the principalities, the seraphim and the cherubim; among all creatures, visible and invisible, there is not one equal to Mary in grandeur and sanctity; not one who like her was, at the same time, the servant and the Mother of God, a Mother and a Virgin." As a solitary star on the brow of night the glory of Mary shines forth. And rapturously we cry out: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people" (Judith xv. 10).

"Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrost
With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
Woman! above all women glorified,
Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
Purer than foam on central ocean tost."

—*Wadsworth.*

Mary rejoices in our praise; because it is prompted by love and filial devotion, and because it brings glory to God. "God is wonderful in his saints" (Ps. lxvii. 37). Especially is He wonderful in the Blessed Virgin, who is the masterpiece of all His works. She is the resplendent mirror reflecting His beauty, as the surface of a placid lake reflects the splendor of the starry heavens.

And now we have gained access to our Blessed Mother; the first words of the Hail Mary have attracted her ears; she listens to its beautiful strains. And always can we obtain a hearing with our Blessed Lady when we strike the sonorous sounds of the Hail Mary. For it penetrates the very heavens and rings out above all other prayers catching and holding the attention of our Blessed Mother.

A PRAYER OF GRATITUDE

The second part of the Hail Mary contains a delicate tribute of gratitude to the Blessed Mother. Now, we know that nothing speaks more in our favor, gains more rapidly the affection of others, unlocks the hearts and wins sympathy so readily, than gratitude. He who is grateful is considered worthy of new benefits. We never rue a gift conferred on an appreciative person, and we are willing to multiply our favors if we know that they are received with a sense of gratitude. Thus we also enlist the good feeling of Mary by our demonstration of gratitude in the Hail Mary. And such a noble, finely tuned, well-balanced expression of thankfulness! It is not as a full-blown rose in glaring colors, but as a half-closed bud, revealing the daintiest tints and suggesting rich and glorious dyes.

"Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." We bless the name, the memory of those, at whose hands we have received great favors. Mary has been to us a blessing and a source of many blessings. Ah, we do not bless the name of the unfortunate, ill-fated mother of our race! Sad memories cluster around the name of Eve! Wo has it brought to mankind! It spells sin and death! It is a disastrous, ominous name! But the name of Mary is a luminous name! It is synonymous with grace and life! It conjures up before our eyes the happy events of the incarnation and redemption. No evil has come through her! And rightly do we bless her name! To no woman do we owe as much as we owe to Mary. And we acknowledge this debt of gratitude by calling her "blessed among women." "Behold, all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke i. 48). And Him whom she has given to us her only-begotten Son, we also bless. Gratitude will touch the heart of Mary and will incline her to grant us what we ask and need.

Gratitude prepares new favors. There is nothing more repulsive, nothing which makes us more undeserving of future kindness and benevolence, than to forget and ignore past favors. Ingratitude will chill the kindest heart and harden it against our petitions. It dries up the fountains of generosity and clogs the channels of kindness. Therefore, aspiring to new graces, we first

show ourselves thankful for what we have already received. Gratitude for kindness of the past softens and chastens also the selfishness which lies in every petition. No! we do not come to our Mother only to ask and receive favors; we come also to offer her the tribute of praise and of love and of gratitude. But must not a prayer, combining these elements in such beautiful harmony, be acceptable to our Blessed Lady? We now understand the efficacy of the Hail Mary and its high excellence as a prayer.

But someone may object that this is taking things in a very human way. Be it so; but we are human, and can only represent heavenly things according to our human way of thinking and feeling. Did not our Lord condescend to clothe eternal ideas in terms and images drawn from our every-day experiences? If we wish to speak of the Blessed Virgin and her relations to us, we must resort to terms and illustrations that savor strongly of this earth, where we poor mortals are at home. And, after all, our Blessed Mother had a human heart; pure it was, sinless, foreign to everything low and mean; but withal human. And every noble and lofty human sentiment we may attribute to her. Nor will the Blessed Mother be displeased if we speak of her according to our poor stammering human fashion.

A PRAYER OF PETITION

Following upon the praise and thanksgiving by which we have honored our Blessed Mother, our supplications will now be most favorably received. Let us now forget the glory of our dear heavenly Mother, let us set aside her exalted position, let us close our eyes to her dazzling splendor; and let us think only of our misery and our needs. Let us pour into her ears the sad tale of our wo! There is a responsive chord in the heart of Mary thrilling to every human suffering. Mary has also borne the heavy weight of earthly life. She has been familiar with tears and sorrow. Her life-path was rugged and thorny; and her feet were sore and weary. She will understand our sighs and prayers. Let us speak to her as companions in hardship and distress:

> "Oh, when our need is uttermost,
> Think that to such as death may strike
> Thou once wert sister sister-like!"
>
> —*D. G. Rossetti.*

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death." There is not a superfluous word in this supplication. It is earnest, humble, modest, brief and strong. It has a terseness inspired by real need. It sounds as a cry for help. It is piercing as a signal of distress. This prayer, fraught with our tears, instinct with the anxiety of our hearts, winged by hope, we send from the dangerous shoals of time to the calm, serene shores of eternity. It is as the pathetic pleading of a child crying in the dark.

We do not ask anything in particular. We leave this to our Mother. She knows what we need; she knows how to help us. We abandon ourselves to her. What a tender token of confidence! There is no calamity, no danger, no adversity, in which her help will fail, no pain which her intercession will not relieve. Do we not address her by such glorious titles, as: Refuge of sinners and help of Christians! Her maternal heart will suggest what is most beneficial and salutary for us. And so we say nothing more than, Pray for us, dear Mother, help us. For prayer means help; because the prayer of the Blessed Virgin is all-powerful with almighty God. St. Bernard says: "No one ever had recourse to her protection, implored her help, and sought her mediation without obtaining relief." It is very reasonable for us not to detail our wants; for they are many and numerous and of great variety; and we frequently lack discretion and desire things which are hurtful to our souls. But our Mother will exercise great wisdom and forethought; she will not give us fatal gifts and poisonous sweets. So we will pray in the humility of our hearts, with the complete trust of a child, with the stirring earnestness of a dumb appeal: "Mary, Mother of God, pray for us."

This prayer is always opportune. It is never out of season. It is adapted to all circumstances. "Pray for us now." There is not a moment in life that we do not need heavenly help. Every hour brings its own dangers. Every day has its burden. That little word "now" has a very comprehensive meaning. It embraces every instant of our life. From one single moment may our eternal happiness depend. But that important moment is not to-morrow; it is not the past and not the future. It is now. Eternity hangs on the present minute. This fleeting hour is pregnant with eternal

issues. "Behold, now is the acceptable time: behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). But, if this is so, if the present moment determines our eternal destiny, then we need the help of the Blessed Mother now, emphatically, at this very moment.

"Pray for us now!" When our footsteps falter on the way of virtue; when we grow weary and disheartened, climbing the hill of perfection; when our fervor languishes and our charity wanes; then may we implore our Blessed Mother: "Pray for us now." When doubts assail our holy faith; when our dormant passions are lashed into blind fury; when the allurements of the world and the seductive charm of sin blind us and fascinate our will, then again let us beseech our Mother: "Pray for us now." When the enraged waves of the sea roll high and threaten to engulf the frail bark of our life; when somber clouds darken the heavens and ruin besets our every step; when the powers of the deep gather to draw us into the infernal abyss, then let us entreat Mary: "Pray for us now."

But most of all, "Pray for us at the hour of our death." Every moment of our life helps to shape our eternal destiny. One moment is decisive, final, irrevocable. It is the moment of death. The world forsakes us. Our friends are impotent. Our own strength declines. A narrow bridge spans the terrible chasm between time and eternity. The deep yawns dark as night. The glaring eyes of hell stare at us. A strange land lies before us. we stand at the gates of eternity. Our foot is on the threshold of another world. We are to make our last step. And everything depends upon this step: hell or heaven, bliss or wo, eternal life or eternal death. Well may we cry out: "Holy Mary, pray for us at the hour of our death." Help us, when earthly help is of no avail. Stretch out thy hand; steady our footsteps on that last and perilous journey; guide us into that unknown land. Ward off the enemies of our salvation. Lead us along the narrow path on the edge of the dreadful precipice. Inflame in our soul the torch of faith; shield the mild light of hope, glimmering in our bosom, from the chilling blast of despair! Save us! When the shadows of death gather about us, when our conscience is troubled by fear and remorse, when the specters of our sins rise against us; when the powers of darkness redouble their efforts; when agony con-

vulses our wasted frame and cold perspiration moistens our brow; when our startled soul trembles on our lips, then may our last breath be a fervent prayer to our Blessed Mother in heaven.

CONCLUSION

My dear friends, there is no other prayer by which we can so well, so fitly, so effectively, praise, bless and invoke the Blessed Virgin, as by the Hail Mary. Great masters have composed it; an angel, St. Elizabeth and the Church; all three enlightened by the Holy Ghost. It has always proved to be a powerful prayer and a mighty means of grace. Then say often the Hail Mary. Let it ever be on your lips. It will purify your lips and sanctify your life. It is brief. You will always find a minute to recite it. However much you may be in a hurry in the morning; however much you may be tired in the evening, you have a minute to spare for a Hail Mary. A Hail Mary, recited faithfully every single day of your life, may be your salvation. It will bring you comfort in afflictions, strength in temptations, safety in dangers, grace in life, help in death and glory in heaven. Amen.

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Catholic Encyc., Vol. VII, p. 110; St. Thomas, *Exposito in salutationem angelicam; Tanquerey, De Verbo Incarnato,* ‡ ‡ 1259 ff.; Pohle-Preuss, *Mariology,* pp. 133 ff.; Savonarola, *The Hail Mary;* St. Alphonsus, *The Glories of Mary;* MacEvilly, on Luke I. 28; Bellord, *Meditations,* etc., Vol. I, p. 368; Callan, *Illustrations for Sermons,* etc., pp. 51 ff.; Vaughan, *The Divine Armory,* etc., pp. 133 ff.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SUBJECT

THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE

TEXT

What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken by the wind? —MATT. xi. 7.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. After John the Baptist had been cast by Herod into the prison of Machaerus his disciples, seeing the greater works of Christ, were moved with jealousy against the Saviour. John, in order to satisfy them that Jesus was really the expected Messiah, sent two of them to Him, that they might see and hear for themselves. It was following this visit of John's disciples that our Lord bore that wonderful testimony to the Baptist's dauntless courage and fortitude which we have just read. Fortitude was perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of St. John's life and action. It was this sterling virtue that enabled him to upbraid so publicly and fearlessly the vices of the Pharisees, whom he called a brood of vipers (Matt. iii. 7), that gave him strength to rebuke King Herod for his incestuous marriage (Matt. xiv. 3, 4), that made him the brave champion of the Divinity and Messiahship of Christ and that fitted him for the trials of the desert, the sufferings of his desolate prison, and finally his cruel martyrdom.

I. The nature and meaning of fortitude. 1. Fortitude is a moral virtue that moderates the passions and gives the courage to endure or attack evil in the pursuit of good; in other words, fortitude is a readiness to encounter the greatest evils rather than turn aside from the path of duty. 2. There are two functions of fortitude: (a) an active function, which moves one to attack evil; (b) a passive function, which enables one to bear evil. The former restrains boldness; the latter represses fear, and is therefore the more excellent, because it is more difficult to repress fear than

to temper boldness. Active fortitude requires heroism in thought and action; passive fortitude demands patience and constancy. 3. The excellence of fortitude is seen in this that it is the support of all the other virtues, and that without it no one can be saved, since the life of man is a warfare (Job vii. 1; 2 Tim. ii. 5; Matt. xi. 12). 4. Fortitude has various degrees: (a) mortification of the passions, *e.g.*, anger, lust, etc. (Prov. xvi. 32); (b) endurance of grave difficulties for the sake of one's neighbor, *e.g.*, labor, hunger, thirst, dangers to soul and body (2 Cor. xi. 26); (c) tranquil endurance of trying unforeseen evils, *e.g.*, the sudden loss of friends, relatives, etc.; (d) martyrdom. 5. The vices opposed to fortitude are boldness and cowardice.

II. The virtues akin to fortitude. 1. *Magnanimity* is a readiness of soul to do great things for God; its opposites are presumption and pusillanimity. 2. *Magnificence* inclines one to spend money lavishly for noble purposes, such as building churches, hospitals, etc. The opposites of magnificence are extravagance and penuriousness. 3. *Patience* moderates the sadness arising from the evils of life, enabling one to practice virtue in the midst of difficulties. Christian patience is not to be confounded with apathy or stoical insensibility. 4. *Constancy* strengthens the mind against imminent evils and the prolonged difficulties that attend the practice of virtue. The opposites of constancy are stubbornness and fickleness.

III. The means of advancing in fortitude. 1. Fervent love of God makes one strong; love is strong as death (Cant. viii. 6). St. Paul said nothing could separate him from the love of Christ (Rom. viii. 35–37). 2. Foresight of probable evils strengthens one, because "forewarned is forearmed." 3. Frequent meditation on the lasting rewards to be given for passing suffering greatly assists the growth of fortitude (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 18). 4. Recollections of the examples of fortitude afforded by our Lord and the saints is of greatest benefit to our increase in spiritual strength (1 Peter ii. 21; iv. 1). 5. The practice of fortitude in small matters makes one strong in greater matters (Luke xvi. 10).

EXHORTATION. 1. Compare our weakness in spiritual things with the strength of John the Baptist. How often are we deterred from our spiritual duties—from hearing Mass, going to confession and Communion, keeping fasts, etc., out of false shame, fear of criticism, fear of losing the world's praise, etc.? 2. Many of us are brave and strong in civil, social, and political matters, ready to defend and fight for our rights, but, on the contrary, how weak in defending the faith, the Church, the ministers of Christ, etc. 3. Let us often reflect on the opposition, persecution, sacrifices and martyrdoms suffered in former times for Christ and His Church, and thus stir ourselves to greater strength and zeal in the practice of the sacred duties which our faith imposes on us.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

(See Seventh Sunday after Pentecost in Dogmatic Series and Last Sunday after Pentecost in this Series)

Sermons

FORTITUDE

BY THE REV. J. A. MC HUGH, O.P.

NATURE AND IMPORTANCE

Fortitude is a virtue which makes one ready to face great dangers, even death itself, for the sake of righteousness. Its purpose is to regulate within due bounds both fear and courage; hence there are two acts of fortitude: that which restrains daring but braces the will to attack evil in defense of the right, and that which represses fear and strengthens one to bear trouble rather than desert duty.

In its highest sense fortitude is exercised only when death itself is encountered for a good cause. The soldier who dies for his country and the martyr who dies for the true faith exemplify this high degree of fortitude. It should not be thought, however, that the opportunities of practising fortitude are rare and that the virtue is of little importance for the generality of mankind. While

the danger of death is rarely imminent and usually is not consequent on the practise of virtue, the same cannot be said of other grave evils. Good deeds not infrequently require sacrifice or bring upon their doers mortal enmities or even serious temporal loss. Again a certain firmness of soul is necessary to preserve the virtues that adorn the soul and to beat off the attack of vice and this St. Ambrose calls "no slight degree of fortitude." Though the danger of death and war be absent, there are other dangers which the Christian must encounter, the warfare of our passions, conflicting desires and spiritual temptations.

The need, then, of exercising the lesser degrees of fortitude, that is, of practising virtue in despite of dangers and difficulties less terrible than death, is not rare but usual. The same may be said of fortitude in the wider sense, that steadfastness of soul without which no real virtue is possible. The uses of fortitude, therefore, are of daily occurrence, and we see how important is the consideration of this subject.

In Baptism fortitude is infused supernaturally into our souls both as a virtue and as a gift of the Holy Ghost. It is given us to be made use of. Let us consider the two acts of fortitude we spoke of before, viz., to fight and to suffer, and also the means for progressing in this virtue.

FORTITUDE IN COMBAT

We see everywhere in the physical world a struggle for existence. Not to mention the incessant warfare that goes on in the lower kinds of life, in which one species preys upon another—man himself, "the lord of creation," must contend daily for his existence against the stubbornness of the soil, the destructiveness of the elements, the violence of savage beasts, the lurking agencies of disease and pestilence. Similarly in the spiritual world the law of struggle prevails, so much so that Job (vii. 1) declares that man's life on earth is a warfare. Against our spiritual well-being are leagued together three powerful enemies, the world, the devil and the flesh. With these mortal foes no peace or truce is possible and the attacks they make upon us are more or less violent and unremitting throughout our whole existence upon earth.

By the flesh we understand here the unregulated passions of our

nature. These were given us to obey the reason and to be instruments for the service of God. But owing to the upheaval that took place in the fall of our first parents, the passions have rebelled and make continual war against the reason. Unhappy he who allows them to gain the upper hand and to assume control, for there is no despotism so absolute, no tyranny so cruel, as that of a dominating passion. But even though the passions do not succeed in deposing the reason, they yet conduct a violent warfare that calls for unceasing vigilance. Even the saints have experienced this domestic conflict in which the law of the members wars against the law of the mind. For St. Paul it was so terrible that he prayed that death might deliver him: "Who," he said, "shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.).

Of the two external foes with which the soul must contend, one is visible, the other unseen. The former is the world, that is the corrupt society of all those who love the world, as St. Augustine explains. The world allies itself with the rebellious passions and corrupt inclinations of human nature, thus strengthening these evil tendencies and making the victory of the soul more difficult. This assistance is given by the false maxims prevalent in human society, which deride virtue and exalt vice. For the diffusion of its principles the world possesses powerful means in the evil press, the seductive pictures, the infamous tongues that spread scandal and disorder, the unbecoming dress, the corrupt examples that are so prevalent on every side. All these are but so many nefarious agencies which the world employs to excite and inflame the baser passions and destroy the rule of the soul over matter. Well did the pagan historian Tacitus characterize the life of the world when he said that it consisted in corrupting and being corrupted.

Besides this earthly foe which makes open cause with the passions, there is a spiritual enemy, stronger than either, who secretly directs or assists their campaign. For "our wrestling," says St. Paul, "is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Eph. vi. 12). The demons, because of their audacity, power, craft, hatred and unwearied attacks are the most formidable foes

against whom we must contend in the spiritual conflict. We understand the boldness of these evil spirits when we remember that their leader dared to tempt even our Lord Himself, and that their aim is to usurp the rule which God exercises over us. As to their cunning we have a warning example in the snare they prepared in the Garden of Paradise by which our first parents, with all their wondrous endowments of grace and understanding, were seduced with such deplorable consequences to themselves and their posterity. Our struggle against the demons is all the more to be feared, says St. Augustine, since they fight from concealment. Their power for evil is so mighty that St. Paul speaks of them as rulers of the world of wickedness and gives us to understand that all human evil doers are but feeble adversaries in comparison with this fallen race of spirits. So fierce and bitter is Satan's hatred of man that Scripture calls him our adversary and accuser; and so constantly does he plot our destruction that St. Peter warns us to be ever on the alert lest we be taken unawares.

These are the foes against whom we must contend. But we must not fear, for there are many more on our side than on theirs (4 Kings vi. 16). The Lord of Hosts fights with us; Christ, our Leader, has overcome. He gives the word to fight the good fight and promises the victor's crown to those who conquer.

FORTITUDE IN ENDURANCE

The second duty of the virtue of fortitude is endurance. The life of the Christian requires not only the courage to attack and put to rout the enemies of our salvation, but also the courage to bear the sufferings that are permitted by divine Providence. Everyone admires the heroism of the soldier who goes courageously to the post of danger assigned him, realizing the perils that await him; who for love of country endures without a murmur hardships, privations, wounds, captivity, death itself. Such fortitude deserves our grateful admiration and praise. But do we ever think that this same quality which the world calls pluck and grit and steadfastness and which is well nigh worshipped when seen in those great men who suffered for their fellows in some post of worldly duty—do we ever reflect that this same ingredient

of heroism is found in an even higher degree in those heroes of Christian sanctity, the Saints of the Catholic Church? What soldier crouching in some lonely trench, sunken to his knees in mud, weakened with cold and hunger, has ever borne his sufferings with a greater patience than that of countless men and women who were life-long models of that charity which endureth all things? Sickness, pain, want, persecution were accepted and borne by them not only with resignation and long suffering, but even with joy and thanksgiving. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." And if we eulogize those who, on the fields of battle, face the shock and horror of war and willingly make the supreme sacrifice to patriotic devotion, must we not also glorify the brave deeds of the heroic band of Martyrs who for Christ's sake faced with undaunted courage the rack, the stake, the sword and underwent every torture that inhuman cruelty could devise? These are they who washed their robes in the Blood of Christ, who walked in the footsteps of Him who was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

From the history of the Saints we learn how truly brave and strong are they who can withstand the ills of life, not in the spirit of stoical indifference, like insensible stocks and stones, but with Christian equanimity and joy, as becomes children of God. Not only warfare, but endurance is the Christian's portion. For those whom He loveth God chasteneth; and as for the world, it must needs be that it will hate these who love Christ. Since, then, suffering for justice sake is both noble and necessary all who aspire to the dignity of soldier of Christ must take to heart those words of the Leader: "Fear not those that can kill the body but are not able to kill the soul" (Matt. x. 28).

It is true that Catholics to-day are not called upon to die for their faith, as were their ancestors. The fury of persecution does not rage as in times past. Nevertheless the suspicion, distrust and enmity which has always been the world's attitude towards the Church, as indeed our Lord foretold, has not changed. To be this object of hatred is now, as it ever has been, the badge of the true Church. Catholics are often subjected to misrepresentations, annoyances, ostracism, even injustices on account of their religion. In this they should not see matter for surprise or

wonder, but rather encouragement; since it is but a proof that they are members of the one Church of Christ. They should not fear nor be ashamed to profess their faith openly, to live according to its laws, to defend its rights, being ready if need be to encounter the world's scorn and opposition. The disciple is not above the Master.

As to the trials that come from the hand of God, there is none to whom they are not offered. "To no one," says St. Leo, "is companionship in the glory of Christ's Passion denied." But whereas the Saints have been purified by afflictions as gold is cleansed by fire, and have come forth from tribulation, like St. John from the boiling caldron, stronger than ever; those who murmur in adversity draw evil from what was meant for their good and instead of satisfying for past iniquities only store up new wrath against the day of wrath. In trouble, in bereavement, in losses, in anxiety, in sickness the true Christian spirit is to be humbled under the mighty hand of God, knowing that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not" (Rom. v. 3-5).

HOW TO PRACTISE FORTITUDE

St. Paul teaches us where we shall find the fortitude necessary both for combat and for endurance. "Be strengthened," he says, "in the Lord and in the might of His power" (Eph. vi. 10). And he proceeds to point out to us the means by which we may obtain this strength from on high.

The means to be employed in the conflict against the world, the devil and the flesh he thus declares: "Take unto you the armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect" (Eph. vi. 13). In ancient times warriors not only provided themselves with weapons of offense, but covered themselves with defensive armor. St. Paul enumerates the various parts of this military equipment and makes spiritual application to the Christian's armor in his war on sin. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God" (2 Cor. x. 4).

The Roman soldier of the Apostle's day wore about his waist a leather belt, bound with metal and with strips of protecting metal hanging from it. Referring to this the Apostle says:

"Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth"; that is to say, with moral restraint. The internal enemies—lust and gluttony must be first guarded against. Moderation or temperance, therefore, is necessary.

Another part of the legionary's uniform was the cuirass, a coat of leather, reenforced by bands of metal across the breast, back and shoulders. The cuirass of the Christians is that love of justice which makes him refrain from taking or retaining what belongs to another. Have on "the breastplate of justice."

The footwear used in the Roman Army was a boot protecting the feet and shins. The spiritual footwear of the Christian soldier, as St. Thomas explains, is the spirit of detachment from things of earth and of alacrity for the things of the Gospel. Let your feet be shod "with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

As defensive armor the Roman soldier used the shield and helmet. The shield, made of boards and metal, the legionary held before him to ward off the blows and weapons of the enemy. In the Christian conflict there is a shield which no hostile attack can injure and in which all the arms of the enemy are broken, viz., our faith: "In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one."

The soldier defended his head with the helmet, a cap made of iron or leather strengthened with brass. The helmet of our spiritual armor is the hope of salvation, which defends us against the deceitful allurements of the world.

Finally from his girdle or from a shoulder strap round the soldier's neck hung his short, sharp, two-edged sword, the chief weapon of offense. The spiritual sword, the Apostle tells us, is the Word of God. "The Word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit" (Hebr. iv. 12). With this only weapon our Lord conquered and put to flight the tempter in the desert. And so must we do likewise. To the temptation of gluttony we should oppose the words of God: "Not in bread alone does man live" (Deut. viii. 3), and "The Kingdom of God is not food and drink" (Rom. xiv. 17); to the temptation of theft, the command "Thou shalt not steal"; and so with the rest.

Thus does St. Paul point out the virtues which should form our equipment in the warfare against the world, the devil and the flesh. Against carnal desires, injustices and cupidity we should put on the belt of temperance, the breastplate of justice, the shoes of alacrity to do good.

To defend ourselves against false teaching and the assaults of demons we must arm ourselves with the shield of faith. "Whom resist ye, strong in faith." It was by faith, as St. Paul points out (Heb. xi. 33) that the Saints overcame kingdoms. And just as the moral virtues of justice and temperance defend us from earthly foes, so will the theological virtue of faith keep us secure from foes that are spiritual.

The helmet of hope is our defense against the third enemy, the world. For in opposition to the false and fleeting goods with which the world seeks to lead us astray, hope points out the true and enduring bliss of heaven.

The sword of the spirit is a powerful weapon of offense. God's word not only puts to flight the attack of temptation; it enables the servants of God to invade the territory of Satan, to despoil him of his arms and liberate his captives. Like the sword which the Lord sent into the camp of Madian (Judges vii. 22), the preaching of God's word overcomes sin and error and liberates men from the servitude of Satan.

It remains now to say a few words as to the means necessary for the practise of that endurance, which is the second act of fortitude. St. Paul teaches us where this strength is to be found when he says: "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). How we are to obtain this necessary help from God the Apostle teaches us in the same chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians which we have been considering. We must have recourse to prayer. He desires that our prayers, both public and private, be constant and be made not only with the lips but also with the "spirit," that is with attention of mind and devotion of will. Further, we must pray not alone for ourselves but for others also in order that by reciprocal intercessions we may all obtain more easily

that grace of God which is the source of Christian fortitude. "By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit: and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the Saints" (Eph. vi. 18).

Our holy religion has produced in every age admirable examples of fortitude. Outside the Christian religion, on the contrary, even the natural virtue of fortitude is found either not at all or only rarely. We have seen how necessary this virtue is and by what means we are helped to exercise it. Let us pray for it fervently and strive to put it into practise.

Fickleness

BY THE REV. F. PEPPERT

Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall.—Luke xi. 17.

Evil of Fickleness

Our Lord was proving that He did not drive out devils by aid of the devil, and pointed out that wherever strife, emulation and division prevail, desolation and destruction must inevitably follow. He took as His illustration a kingdom divided against itself, the people being engaged in civil war; and He argued that it was impossible for the devil to be helping Him to drive out devils.

These words may, however, teach us another excellent lesson, viz.: that if we suffer discord to reign within us, we must expect nothing but misery. Yet such discord is very common; it is a state of discontent due to absence of peace of mind, in spite of the enjoyment of temporal prosperity. We want to serve God without denying ourselves; we accuse ourselves again and again of our faults, repent of them and mourn over them, and then commit them afresh.

This discord entered into us with original sin, since which time, as St. Paul says, the flesh has been warring against the spirit; and we can overcome this inward disturbance only by the grace of Him who has crushed the serpent's head. It ceases to torment us when what is good and noble in us has obtained permanent dominion over what is evil and base. If with our whole mind and

strength we are in union with God, peace and harmony will reign in our hearts and make us happy, for we shall be freed from that inward discord that drags us this way and that, now to what is good, and now to what is evil, and is an incessant source of restlessness and spiritual misery.

REMEDIES AGAINST FICKLENESS—I. RELIGIOUS TRAINING

If we wish to avoid this inward discord and discontent, this sense of unhappiness at heart, we must be resolute. First of all try to ascertain clearly what God wants of you; for where there is no real recognition of His will there will be constant uncertainty and questioning whether we ought to do this or that; and in such a state of doubt determined action is impossible. A man, wandering in the dark in an unknown locality, cannot take a decided step forward. We need, in the first place, a definite knowledge of our duties, and our reason will enable us to obtain this. It is, therefore, most essential to avail ourselves of every opportunity of developing our reason. The less training is bestowed upon our reason, the more apt is our imagination to run riot, and imagination is never a safe guide to tell us our duty. We may strive in vain to be pious if we allow our imagination to decide what is our duty; for it is easily influenced by sensuality and self-love, it is ready to take a false view of things and to regard what is absolutely wrong as permissible, or even as good and noble. No inconsiderable part of modern literature bears witness to this truth, for barefaced wickedness is often represented as harmless and justified, whilst the moral teaching is so distorted, and absurd eccentricities so highly praised as genuine virtue, that it is really no wonder if uncritical readers store up in their minds the most contradictory views regarding morality. The peculiar moral teaching in such books is no whit better or less injurious than downright immorality. Even if the teaching has a good tendency, making for virtue and piety, it is not on that account much less dangerous than if it diverges altogether from the right path; perhaps it discovers sins where there are no sins, and makes exaggerated demands upon its victim, plunging him into deep depression, because he is unable to comply with these demands, and, by robbing him of all courage, it leads him astray from what is good.

A truly religious training of the intellect is most essential to give us clear and definite principles regarding our duty. When you have once recognized something as a duty, pleasing to God, "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. ii. 1).

2. FIRMNESS OF RESOLUTION

When you have made a good resolution, be true to yourselves and to Christ; do not waver to and fro. Doubts may arise within you, and various opinions and temptations; hours may come when you are inclined to change your mind, since what appeared at first to be right may seem doubtful and uncertain. Do not yield to these temptations; renew your resolution that you formed after due deliberation and after earnest prayer.

To act in one way to-day, and in another to-morrow—to sow to-day and to root up to-morrow, to build to-day and to pull down to-morrow—all this leads to nothing, especially in striving after piety. If we go on in this way, one day will pass after another and the day of our death will find us as devoid of merit as the day of our birth. Be strong to resist all fickleness that is due to your own changes of mind.

3. RESISTANCE AGAINST TEMPTATION

Be strong, too, against fickleness due to outward influences. It is not much good to have a pious heart if it is not at the same time steadfast. If it were our lot to be always with friends like ourselves, anxious to lead good lives, then it would be easy enough to be good. If we always had a hand to guide us, or a voice to warn us, our own want of determination might be replaced by that of others. But a Christian has to go out into the world and stand his ground there. It is not difficult to be resolute in quiet retirement, but to abide by what has once for all been recognized as a right, although countless voices reject it as foolish, false and ridiculous—that is a difficult task. The world has often been compared with a market, and the comparison is apt. Especially at the present time there is so much confusion of opposing theories, each man wishing to draw attention to his own, so that, unless we cling fast to Jesus Christ, we shall be hopelessly bewildered. One

person extols as a virtue what another scorns as folly; and one calls noble what another denounces as mean. As a rule all the rabble on the market-place are of one mind only when they can abuse the Catholic Church and despise true virtue. If you do not accustom yourselves, when you are young, to hold fast what you know to be good, caring nothing for taunts and mockery, and not being credulous in contradiction, you are only too likely to adopt one perverse doctrine after another, and to become the plaything of all in turn. You will let yourselves be persuaded that black is white, and white is black, and finally you will not know what you ought to believe and do, and you will be aware in the depths of your hearts that you are not in union with God, and your souls will be distracted with that anxiety and discontent that are so common nowadays, because without Jesus there can be nothing but discord in our hearts.

4. PRAYER

How can we overcome want of resolution in ourselves and of weakness in fact of temptations, and false teaching from without? "If God be for us," says St. Paul, "who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31), and this thought is our comfort and strength. By means of earnest prayer, renewal of good resolutions, and constant efforts to increase our knowledge of our holy religion, we may steady ourselves, and God will give us strength and not allow anyone to be at variance with His better self, but will help us to act as we think, and always to think in a way pleasing to Him. He will warn you when false principles are likely to mislead you; He will help you to unite true piety with steadfastness of purpose. "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall." Every soul that is really united with God, and determined to continue one with Him, will be a kingdom of God and an abode of His grace. No cunning, no deception and no malice will succeed in robbing such a soul of its faith and goodness; it will serve God with inward peace until He calls it to our everlasting home. Amen.

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SUBJECT

SIN

TEXT

Make straight the way of the Lord.—John i. 23.

Analysis

Introduction. When John the Baptist came forth from the desert to the banks of the Jordan and began to preach the baptism of penance, the report soon spread abroad that he was the expected Messiah, or Elias, who was erroneously supposed to precede the first coming of the Christ, or one of the prophets whom, from time to time, God was accustomed to send the Jews. The Sanhedrim, therefore, sent a deputation to him from Jerusalem to enquire into his mission and personality. But John at once disillusioned them. He said he was not the Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet, but only the voice of one preaching on the confines of the desert the doctrines of penance necessary as a preparation for the advent of the Messiah. His mission consisted in making straight the way for the Lord, that is, in removing from souls all sin and disorder that could offer a hindrance to the grace and message which the Messiah would bring.

John the Baptist's preaching was also for us, who, at this season of Advent, need to fit ourselves for the coming of Christ at Christmas. We must make straight the crooked ways of our hearts and minds, removing all sin from our souls, if we would be in a condition worthily to receive our Lord and Master. In order, therefore, the better to be able to do this, the better to know the ills we need to cure, let us reflect to-day upon the nature of sin, the poison of our spiritual life, and the only obstacle to the coming of Christ into our souls at Christmas.

I. The nature of sin. 1. Sin is any wilful transgression of the law of God. 2. There are two kinds of sin: (a) *original sin*, which is that guilt and stain of soul with which we were all born, and which we have inherited from our first parents; (b) *actual sin*, which is that transgression of which man is personally guilty after coming to the use of reason. 3. The effects of original sin are: (a) the loss of divine grace and the right to paradise; (b) the loss of certain extraordinary gifts, such as immortality, freedom from sickness, etc.; (c) the infliction of certain wounds on the soul, namely ignorance, malice, weakness, and concupiscence. The guilt of original sin and the debt of eternal and temporal punishment incurred by it are removed by Baptism. The miseries of life, such as sickness, labor and death, remain after Baptism in order that they may be a source of merit to the baptized. 4. Two things are necessary for actual sin: (a) that it be a violation of the law of God, *i.e.*, that a person transgress a commandment given either by God Himself, or by lawful human authority; (b) that it be wilful, *i.e.*, that a person knows, or should know, that what he does is wrong, and that he freely chooses to do it. 5. Actual sins, then, are committed in four ways: (a) by wilful thoughts and desires against the law of God, *e.g.*, rash judgment, doubts in matters of faith, jealousy, impure wishes, etc.; (b) by wilful words against the law of God, *e.g.*, blasphemies, lies, backbiting, obscene language, etc.; (c) by wilful deeds against the law of God, that is, all forbidden acts, such as murder, theft, etc., which a person commits himself, or leads others to commit, or

does not prevent when he can and should prevent them; (d) by wilful omissions, that is, by failure to do what one can and is obliged to do.

II. Mortal and venial sin. 1. Mortal sin is a wilful transgression of the divine law by which a person *seriously* fails in his duties towards God, his neighbor, or himself. It is called *mortal* because it causes the death of the soul by depriving it of sanctifying grace. 2. Venial sin is a transgression of the divine law by which one fails slightly in his duties towards God, his neighbor, or himself. There are two kinds of venial sin: (a) those that are due to ignorance, frailty, or surprise, and from which even pious persons are not free (Jas. iii. 2); (b) those that are due to malice, and which are usually habitual, such as lying, uncharitableness, etc. 3. The effects of mortal sin are: (a) it is an act of disobedience, ingratitude, contempt and rebellion against God; (b) it deprives the sinner of the divine friendship; (c) it incurs the debt of eternal punishment. 4. The effects of deliberate venial sin are: (a) it offends God, and is the greatest evil after mortal sin; (b) it disposes us for mortal sin because it diminishes God's graces, cools the fervor of charity, and makes one accustomed to sin: "He that contemneth small things shall fall little by little" (Ecclus. xix. 1); "He that is unjust in that which is little is unjust in that which is greater" (Luke xvi. 10); (c) it renders us deserving of great temporal chastisements, both in this world (examples are Lot's wife, David and Moses), and in the world to come (Apoc. xxi. 27). 5. For a sin to be mortal it is necessary: (a) that the offense be seriously forbidden; (b) that it be committed with full knowledge and consent. If either of these conditions be wanting the sin is only venial. But a venial sin may become mortal: (a) through an erroneous conscience, that is, if the sinner thinks he is committing a mortal sin; (b) if he sins out of contempt for law and authority; (c) if he intends or foresees a grave consequence of his sin, as in the case of scandal.

Lessons. 1. We must not excuse ourselves on the plea that we are weak or have many temptations, because God's grace, which

we can obtain by prayer and the use of the Sacraments, is at all times sufficient for us. Furthermore, if we are weak and easily tempted, we should be careful. If we have weak health we are careful to avoid things injurious to our health. 2. We should guard against venial sins which gradually lead to mortal sins. 3. We should seriously examine our consciences and make ready for a good confession as the necessary means of making straight the paths of our souls and preparing for the coming of our Lord at Christmas.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

(See Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermons

Sin

BY THE REV. RAPHAEL MOSS, O.P.

The wages of sin is death.—Rom. vi. 23.

INTRODUCTION

When St. Paul tells us that the wages of sin is death, he sums up in a few brief words a most important truth, and one which seems patent to our reason, even unaided by the light of faith. "The wages of sin is death"—and indeed whether we consider the material world as revealed to us by our senses, or that more wonderful spiritual world, visible to the understanding alone, we are brought face to face with the evidence of this truth; and change and dissolution of parts in the one, no less than failure and disappointment in the other, alike proclaim and testify to the existence of a discord which can only have been caused by sin or evil. And if we appeal to our faith, and make use of its unfailing light, this judgment of our reason is not only confirmed, but we are enabled to see clearly, where before we saw but dimly. We have explained to us the nature of that death, which is the miserable consequence of sin, for our faith shows us how sin is nothing less than the total absence of that Divine Life-Giver, in whom

all creatures "live and move and have their being." Nay, so bright is the light of faith, that the feeble reason shrinks back dazzled and blinded, and confesses its own inability to look further by admitting that sin is a mystery. And our faith approves of this confession. It reminds us of One who came to make atonement for sin, and then in the very darkest hour of His agony and sacrifice, prayed His Almighty Father to forgive sinners, for that they knew not what they did. These beautiful words of self-forgetting love are not merely the last outpouring of a Heart whose every beat had been an act of supreme generosity—they are likewise the solemn proclamation of a great truth—that man knows not what he does when he sins. To sin, says St. Paul, is to trample under foot the Son of God, it is to crucify Him afresh, and could any Christian knowingly so outrage His Maker, when even the hard-hearted Jews, had they known, would never have crucified the Lord of Glory?

If we sin, then, we sin because of ignorance. But we must not deceive ourselves and plead our ignorance in excuse. Real ignorance excuses from sin, but the ignorance which makes sin is an ignorance for which we are responsible, and so we may meditate for a few moments on the nature of sin, that by the consideration of its intrinsic foulness we may enkindle in our hearts a horror of an ignorance which leads us into such piteous depths of shame and degradation. We have said that sin was nothing less than the absence of Him whose presence is the life of every creature. It is, therefore, a separation, a cruel divorce between the poor creature and its great Creator, and in order to understand the exceeding horror of such a separation we have but to look at the work of sin in the heart of him who yields to it, and its consequences in the infinitely-loving mind of Him who is sinned against.

EFFECTS OF SIN IN MAN

Briefly and clearly, its work is this. Instead of the mutual love which binds together naturally the Infinite Creator and the work of His hands, sin breeds a most unnatural mutual hate! Could anything more terrible be imagined? To hate One who is infinitely deserving of love! to be hated by One who is infinitely loving!

Realize this, and you will have gone a long way toward understanding the mystery of sin. Ponder over it well, and you will begin to sympathize with the heartbroken cry of David, "Wash me yet more from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know mine iniquity, and my sin is always before me" (Ps. l. 4, 5). When we ask our faith to tell us why God broke in upon the loneliness of His eternity, and poured forth the bright loveliness of this mighty universe into the darkness of space, we are answered that it was all for His glory. God, the all-holy, all-powerful, self-sufficing God, could have no purpose, no motive outside Himself, and, therefore, everything that He created He created for Himself, and for the manifestation of His greater glory. And, therefore, it is, as Holy Writ says: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands" (Ps. xviii. 2). But that divine glory was not perfectly shown forth, that song of praise could not be rightly sung, until man came forth from God's creative hand—man, with the understanding heart and power of free will—and bowed himself down in lowly obedience to his Maker. All creatures glorify their Creator by the fulfilment of the end for which He made them, but whereas their obedience is blind and unconscious, the obedience of man is the outcome of knowledge, it is the free and loyal service of the heart.

I. SIN IS DISOBEDIENCE

But, dearest brethren, precisely because man is raised so high, therefore can he fall so low, precisely because he can glorify his Maker so perfectly, therefore can he outrage Him so vilely, precisely because he can honor Him by his obedience, therefore can he dishonor Him by disobedience, and this dishonor, this outrage, this fall is what we call sin. Sin, then, is primarily an act of disobedience, a wilful refusal to conform to the law of God, whether in thought, word, or deed—a stubborn resistance to the voice of our own reason ever loudly proclaiming that obedience to the Creator is the first duty of the creature. It is to follow in the footsteps of the proud and stiff-necked King of Egypt, whose only answer to the divine message was an insolent refusal—"Who is the Lord that I should hear his voice? I know not the Lord"

(Exod. v. 2). And this act of rebellion is all the more hateful because God asks nothing but what is infinitely just and reasonable. He might ask a thousandfold more! He might ask all! He has a right to all, and He might exact all. He might take all by force, whereas He has willed to ask for but a little, and that as a free gift. Compare human laws and human lawgivers with that divine Almighty Providence of which they are the faint reflection! How different is their mode of action! Far from being free to conform to them or not, according to His will, man is forced to comply with their most minute requirements, or, in case of refusal, to submit to the penalty. Nor can he violate the law and hope to escape the penalty by sorrow and repentance, as most certainly he can in the case of the divine judgments. Repentance has no place in human justice, but the punishment must inevitably follow the crime, and the dreary prison, with its bleak walls and hard and thankless toil continued for days and months and years, or the still more terrible scaffold, with its brief but sharp agony of death—these are the avenging consequences of the violation of human laws, these, too, are the stern safeguards of their fulfilment. Then again our obedience to these laws must be its own reward, our submission can bring us no recompense beyond the avoidance of these penalties. Moreover, when we submit our wills to the gentle and easy laws of God, every such act of submission, no matter how small and insignificant and easy, merits for us a reward so much above us that our imagination cannot even picture it. And whilst we have everything to gain by our obedience, that great and mighty God whom we obey, and Who will not force our service, but stoops to buy it of us, can gain absolutely nothing but the glory of our happiness. Yet with all this staring him in the face, with every faculty of his soul protesting against such senseless folly—man sins!

There was a time when God came down amongst His creatures in the midst of lightnings and thunders and clouds to manifest to them His law. And the multitudes around the mountain were smitten with great terror, and fell prostrate on the ground, sending up from their trembling lips the cry, "Let not God show Himself to us, let not God speak to us lest we die!" And yet whilst the hills around them were even yet echoing with the thunders, the

mighty voice of God, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have other gods before me"—whilst the dark clouds still hung on the mountain top, the visible token of His dread presence, they made to themselves a golden calf and set it up and worshipped it, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" And the same pitiful sight is repeated, and will be repeated, day by day, as long as the sun shines upon the earth. "The Lord our God is the Lord, him only shalt thou adore, him only shalt thou serve." This is the voice that is ever sounding over the world, ringing through the darkest caverns of man's sinful heart, and obliging him to listen to its unchanging commands. But it cannot or it will not oblige him to obey, and so man ever lifts his head against his Maker, and defies Him to His face. "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me." "Who is the Lord that I should hear His voice? I know not the Lord." I will adore whom I choose, I will make gods of my own wayward inclinations, my own vile passions, my own sinful desires. I will place them on the throne of my heart and bow down before them and proclaim to the world the gods whom I have chosen—these be my gods, O Israel. And as I have made them my gods, so also will I serve them and them only, and all other commandments I will despise. But there is a lower depth still:

2. SIN IS INGRATITUDE

"What hast thou," says the Apostle, "what hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). But if we may not even glory in the powers of our being and the joys that they bring us, simply because they are not our own, but the gifts of the Creator, what are we to say of the man who not only seizes them as his own, but even dares to employ them against Him who bestowed them? The servant who lifts his hand against his master forfeits his place; the subject who rebels against his king forfeits his life; but what if the master had found that servant dying of hunger by the roadside and by his loving care and attention had nursed him back to life and strength! What if the king had raised that subject from his lowly state and set him to rule in his place over kingdoms and empires? Rebellion! treason! These are not the words to express such a

crime, and it is only because language fails that we call it ingratitude! Yet no earthly master, no monarch of this world, could give to those beneath them what God has given to us, for He has given us all, even our being! This body which we love so dearly, and honor so madly, it is His gift—the soul that quickens it, and makes us what we are, it came from His life-giving breath. Our home, our friends, our parents, our children, our pleasures, our enjoyments, they are all from Him, they are the tokens of His love, He holds them and us in the hollow of His hand. And then in the order of grace! Each individual soul knows its own history, and what has passed between that soul and God is a secret until the great Day of Judgment. But each of us knowing his own special wants, his own special failings, and God's special patience and most loving kindness, each one can speak for himself and confess that nowhere on earth is there a soul so laden with God's gifts as his own. In the early ages of the Church, when the gates of hell were making every effort to prevail against it, they brought before the heathen judge an old and feeble man, Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, and threatened him with the wild beasts and the stake if he would not blaspheme Christ. "Eighty-six years have I served Him," replied the saint, "and He never did me wrong, but ever blessed me in many ways. How, then, can I blaspheme Him, my Lord and Saviour?" And gladly and joyously he chose the savage wild beasts and the burning fire. We wonder at his courage and we praise his devotion to duty, and we speak of such a sacrifice as a duty, because, in spite of ourselves, and no matter how we stop our ears, our reason is ever telling us that to Him, who has given us everything, everything, even life itself, is due in return. All this we must admit, or else deny the light of reason within us. And yet whilst he admits it in theory, the sinner by his acts denies it, when God is concerned. His hands and his feet, his eyes and his ears, his health and his strength, his understanding and his will, all the bright gifts that God has bestowed upon him, are turned into weapons against the generous Giver. And who is it that does this? Who so disgraces our nature? The sinner! But who is the sinner? Ah, my dearest brethren, it is not someone imagined by preachers, someone we have never met, but it is we ourselves—it is you, it is I! Louder than the accusing voice of

the prophet Nathan, striking down the royal David in all the pride of his sin, with the bitter reproach, "Thou art the man," is the voice of conscience in our hearts, tearing away the veils of sham piety and worldly respectability and, perhaps, unconscious hypocrisy, in which we wrap ourselves, and piercing our hard, cold hearts with the same terrible accusation, "Thou art the man! Thou hast forsaken the Lord that begot thee, thou hast forgotten the Lord that created thee."

3. SIN IS HATRED OF GOD

Now, dearest brethren, see for a moment how this disobedience and this ingratitude on the part of the sinner must beget in his heart a real hatred of his Creator and his God. If we despise a law, is it not because we despise the lawgiver? If we do not even think of it, is it not because we simply do not think it worth our while? A command which comes from one we love is obeyed with ready joy, no matter what the cost; if it come from one to whom we are indifferent, we coldly weigh its justice in our minds and act accordingly. But if we do not even give it a thought, it is surely because we despise and hate the one from whom it comes. Now, in which way do we listen to the commandments of God? With eagerness, with indifference, or with contempt? Sin is contempt of the law of God, and therefore to indulge in sin is to hate God. Then again, ingratitude implies hate, even as gratitude implies love. Polycarp could not blaspheme his benefactor, because he loved Him. Had he yielded to the temptation, it would have proved his love was dead. But when, instead of resisting temptation and resisting unto blood a man revels in the filthy waters of sin, when its occasions are his joys, its obstacles his unhappiness, when instead of fighting against the tempter, he himself tempts his neighbor, and endeavors to increase the number of God's foes, is it not manifest that in his heart lurks a hatred of Him who hates nothing but sin! He does what evil he can, he would do more if he could, and because he finds there are limits to his powers of evil, he turns upon his Master, his Creator, and would destroy Him if he could.

EFFECTS OF SIN ON GOD

But there is another side to this most dismal picture, for so far we have only considered the work of sin in the soul of man. We have now to contemplate its effect on our all-merciful Creator, and this sight at least must convince us of its utter foulness. When creation lay first before the face of God in all its unsullied beauty, He blessed it and loved it, for He saw that it was good. His Almighty love was poured out upon the things that He had made—it surged around them like a limitless ocean preserving in them the life and the existence that His power had bestowed. But like a cloud over the face of the deep, troubling all its beauty, sin came into the world, and God, who is love itself, found Himself compelled to hate. It could not be otherwise. He is goodness itself, sin is evil itself, and therefore He must necessarily hate it with an infinite, unchanging hate. Nay, more! When this most hateful stain appeared on the creatures He had made, and called out of nothing, the eternal love with which He had hitherto cherished them died away on the instant, and gave place to an unspeakable loathing.

1. MANIFESTED IN THE PUNISHMENT OF THE ANGELS

Millions and millions of angelic beings stood around Him, each one of them a world of unimaginable loveliness—their leader Lucifer, a very masterpiece of the Divine Mind, and lo! of a sudden, that leader and a third part of those glorious beings were cast into the bottomless pit. Sin appeared amongst them, and swift, hopeless, and eternal ruin was its instant fruit.

2. MANIFESTED IN THE PUNISHMENT OF MAN

In another part of creation dwelt other beings, but a little lower than the angels in beauty and in power; they also stained themselves with sin, and the anger of God was kindled against them likewise. It would take long to tell of all that they lost, and, indeed, only they themselves could rightly tell the bitterness of their loss—but the terrible consequences of their sin reached forward to succeeding ages, and on millions of their children yet

unborn the hand of God fell heavily. All nature rose up in rebellion against those who had rebelled against the Creator of all, and the beautiful home that God had given to man became a weary vale of tears. For six thousand years at least, God's curse had been upon our race in consequence of that sin; for six thousand years man has been weeping bitterly, oh so bitterly under its heavy burden, and yet that curse is unrecalled, and will never be recalled until the end. For some unfortunates there will be no end, and God's undying hatred of sin will make their unrepenting souls the companions and the victims of the fallen angels in an everlasting hell.

3. MANIFESTED IN THE REDEMPTION

All this we know, for God Himself has told us, yet lest we should mistake it or grow forgetful, He would give us another and a greater proof of His hatred of sin, and so He Himself came down amongst us and made Himself one of us, and then offered Himself up as a victim for sin. How He accomplished His task a glance at the cross will tell you. There you will see stretched out on that tree of shame the gracious form of Him who was beautiful above all the sons of men, because He was likewise their God. His body is all torn with cruel wounds—there is a deep rent in His sacred side. His head bowed down in death is encircled with a wreath of prickly thorns, and from His hands and feet pierced by long, iron nails—and indeed from every part of His mangled body the great red drops of blood trickle slowly, and every drop of blood and every gaping wound proclaims God's hatred of sin. O, then, my beloved brethren, if sin demanded a sacrifice of such infinite worth, it must be that sin is an infinite evil. If it could only be atoned for by the death of Him who was infinite to God, it must be that it is the mortal enemy of God. If the blood of Jesus Christ, if the shameful death of Jesus Christ, the coequal Son of the Eternal Father alone could blot out this terrible stain, it must be that God alone can know its full exceeding horror. And we, looking upon all this, realizing all this, hear in our sin-stained hearts the whispering of a reproachful voice: "Know thou and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord thy God" (Jer. ii. 19).

CONCLUSION

It is an evil and a bitter thing! How evil, how bitter we cannot truly realize, but we can do our best. Our own nature will help us in every way. "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil" (Rom. ii. 9). And as reasonably might we expect the sun to fail us as that this law of divine justice should be made void. True, there are some who seem to escape, some who go through life revelling in every sin and laughing at the thought of punishment, but none the less is it true that "the wages of sin is death," and in their souls death is already at work. The world may not notice it, but to God, and to the angels, and generally to himself as well, the sinner is a reflection of that fallen "seraph on whose cheek sate care," for, in spite of himself, his soul is ever longing and yearning for a lost glory which can be his no more. For though he may repent, and God in His loving mercy may forgive, yet has sin done its work, and though repentance may efface the stain, it can never, never give back innocence. And oh! the sorrow of that thought for a soul that is sincere in its repentance! Holy Scripture tells us how God appeared to Solomon, and bade him ask whatsoever he would, and Solomon prayed for the gift of wisdom and understanding. Had that gracious vision been vouchsafed to him in later years, he would have surely made another prayer in the words of his father, David, "Wash me from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I know my wickedness, and my sin is ever before me." And that prayer we also would reecho, for weak as we are, sinful as we are, even we, sometimes at least, have some faint lingering memories of the days of our innocence, those bright, happy days, when we knew not what sin was, and their half-remembered fragrance fills our hears with regret and makes them ache with sorrow. "Oh give me back my innocence, give me back the purity that once was mine, give me back those happy days when Thy light shone over my head and I walked before Thee in justice." These would be the words that would come to our lips, when at such moments we kneel down and speak to God in prayer—but the glory of that innocence is gone, and gone forever; and our prayer must be like David's, a cry of repentance, a pleading en-

treaty for that innocence which is born of forgiveness (Ps. xxxvii): "My iniquities are gone over my head, and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me." "I am become miserable and bowed down even to the end. I walked sorrowful all the day long." "Lord! all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee." "For in thee, O Lord, have I hoped—thou wilt hear me, O Lord my God!" "For I will declare my iniquity, and I will think of my sin."

That is our only hope. We have sinned and done evil, and the burden will indeed lie heavy upon us, unless we replace the lost innocence of sinlessness by the innocence of repentance, and so escape the consequences of our folly. And then even the approach of that death, which is the wages of man's first sin, will fail to make us fearful, since, as Holy Writ assures us, to keep innocence and to take heed to what is right, is the only sure way to bring a man peace at the last.

Sin

BY THE REV. J. A. MCMULLAN, C.SS.R.

Know thou and see that it is an evil and bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God.—Jer. ii. 19.

SIN AN ABANDONMENT OF GOD

We can never leave God. "If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there. If I descend into hell, Thou art there. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me and Thy right hand hold me" (Ps. cxxxviii. 8, 9). Yet God regards the heart, and when a sinner wishes in his heart to be away from God that he might sin, then that sinner is to God as the prodigal "who went into a *distant country*." Sin, then, is leaving the Lord our God, in thought and affection; and the prophet would have us "know" and "see" that this is "an evil and bitter thing." We need serious and prayerful thought to realize this profitably in our souls.

THE WORLD MAKES LIGHT OF SIN

The world makes light of sin, and of God's punishment of sin, for the very reason that it makes no effort to consider these

things. "With desolation is the whole world desolate because no one thinketh in his heart" (Jer. xii. 11). "He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not," for the majority of men and women do not trouble to think about Him. They do not "attend and see that He is God." He is not for them a Personal Being, whose punishment they fear and whose approval they prize. For them it practically is as if He were not. And as they ignore Him they think nothing of offending Him and despise His punishments. They have imbibed the poison of the devil's lie to our first parents.

"You shall not die the death." And it has made them utterly irresponsible and entirely defiant. "We have sinned," they cry, "and what harm hath befallen us?" And because God hath spared them, they despise the "riches of His goodness and patience and long suffering." But God is not mocked; nor hath He left Himself without witness of His hatred for sin. Our first parents did die the death; and we are all condemned to death for their sin. The angels of heaven, the greatest of His created beings, were for sin hurled from their lofty thrones into the depth of hell. "I saw Satan, like lightning, fall from heaven," said our Blessed Lord. And most of all does "Christ crucified" preach trumpet-tongued to man from His every wound "the evil and bitterness of sin." There does the wisdom of God deign to become our Teacher. How can worldlings look on their Saviour dying for sin upon the Cross and say that sin is a small matter in the eyes of God. How can they flatter themselves that they can sin with impunity? If "God hath spared not His only begotten Son," what will become of sinners? "Weep not for Me," said Christ to the sorrowing women, "but weep for yourselves. For if in the green wood they do these things, what will they do in the dry?" If the strict justice of God demanded the death of a God-made-man as an adequate atonement for sin, how can man say hell is too great a punishment for the sinner who defies his God by his sin, and dies in rebellion against Him? And yet outside the Church of Christ men nowadays will brook no allusion to hell. They resent the mention of it as an insult to good taste. Hell is out of date, it is obsolete, it is medieval. Priests were ridiculed for pointing to the disasters at St. Pierre, at Messina, and the

wreck of the Titanic, as punishments from God. Let us be quite clear. It is true they may not have been punishments. "No man hath known the mind of the Lord and no one hath been His counsellor." We know that. And it may have been but a coincidence, merely, that these disasters should in each separate instance have followed fast on sins that cried to heaven for vengeance. I say it may have been a coincidence merely. It is a matter of evidence, and we can form our own opinion, and I know what I think. But when these critics speak as though these disasters were too great a punishment for sin, and worse than the sins themselves, then we can only conclude that they have not profitably studied the lessons of the Crucifix.

For in that school of Christ Crucified we can learn with St. Augustine that if the whole world were suddenly destroyed by some violent convulsion of nature, and every man, woman and child living in it were annihilated, that disaster, frightful and appalling though it might be, could not in God's sight equal the disaster of one single mortal sin committed only in thought. To repair the ruin of a destroyed world God had but to speak a word: by a word He had made it; by a word He could remake it; but to repair the disaster of one mortal sin the Son of God, obedient to His Father's Will, must needs come down from heaven and die a shameful death upon the Cross. And yet men with the crucifix before them, men and women calling themselves Christians, commit mortal sin and never give it a thought. They sin and sin again; they drink in iniquity like water, yet they eat and drink, they go to rest, they rise to work or play again, as though nothing had happened.

My friends, what can be the explanation of it except just this: that men will not think. As of old, so now God sends His preachers to make men think. "Cry out, cease not," He says to them. "Let your voice sound like a trumpet; tell the men of Juda their sins, and the people of Israel their iniquities" (Is. lviii. 1). God wants to warn them and to save them. But, alas! over how many has He now to weep as once He wept over Jerusalem. "How have I longed to gather thee as a hen gathered her chickens under her wing; and thou wouldst not." They heed not their Saviour. They pass their lives in eating and drinking, and in a

moment they go down to hell. Such is the spirit of the children of the world, and such is the destruction that threatens them.

NEED OF REALIZING THE EVIL OF SIN

Now, dear children in Christ, you live in the world and there is danger of your inhaling the tainted atmosphere of its spirit, this moral poison of thinking lightly of sin. It would be the beginning of your spiritual decay. God has called you to this sermon perhaps for this reason above the rest to warn you against it; to renew in your soul a healthy horror of mortal sin; to let you see it in the way as He sees it; to convince you once and for ever of its intrinsic evil and its cruel bitterness. He has called you here into His presence. He has gathered you round His sacramental throne where "He, the Merciful and Gracious Lord, gives to them that fear Him the Food wherein He has left a Memorial of all His wonderful works." For He is Himself that Food. "I am the living Bread that came down from heaven." We are looking, then, at Jesus. At Jesus, the God-made Man, our Creator and our Redeemer; the great God that made us and the loving God who died for us. These are His works for us, the works of which He is Himself the Living Memorial in that Blessed Sacrament, and we have sinned against Him. We have all sinned and do need the grace of God. We have lived in the world, and like the world we have forgotten God. But now at least when we are in His presence and call to mind all that He has done for us we should, like His great servants, feel abashed and awestruck before Him. Jacob after the vision, Moses at the burning bush, Elias on the mountain side, have bowed them low and trembled when they knew that God was near. "Depart from me," cries Peter, realizing that Jesus was God. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Before that same God are we now assembled. Surely our only attitude can be that of the contrite and humbled sinner wishing to do penance for sin. When the proud and self-sufficient Pharisees came to John entirely devoid of this spirit they were sternly reminded of what was wanting in them. "Ye brood of vipers, who hath shewn ye to flee from the wrath to come. Bring forth, therefore, works worthy of penance, and think not to say: 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I tell you of these

stones could God raise up children to Abraham. Whose fan is in His hand and He will most thoroughly cleanse His floor. And the wheat He will gather into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii. 7, seqq.). Let us be warned, then, and come to our God in penance and humility of heart. He is our Creator, and by sin we have rebelled against Him: this is the *evil* of mortal sin. He is our Redeemer, and we have despised Him: this is the *bitterness* of mortal sin.

WE SHOULD REPENT, BECAUSE SIN IS AN OFFENSE AGAINST OUR CREATOR

"Despisest thou," asks the Apostle, "the riches of His goodness and patience and long suffering, knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance" (Rom. ii. 4). The benignity of God in creating us should move us to penance. They who cry, "We have sinned, and what evil hath befallen us, despise the riches of His goodness." Let our cry rather be, "I have sinned, and indeed I have offended; I have not received what I have deserved, for by my sin I actually defied and rebelled against the God, whose love has created me and bestowed on me all I had, and whose power alone sustained me even in my sin." When you come to die, my brethren, the priest will recommend your soul to God in the words of the Ritual, "Remember, he is *Thy creature*, not made by strange gods but by Thee, the only true God." And each day holy Church makes the same plea for mercy in her office. "Let us weep before the Lord *who made us*, for he is the Lord our God and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. xciv). It reminds God of His love for us. For only out of love could God have made us. Unaided reason might have told us this, but God's word has set it beyond a doubt: "With an everlasting love have I loved thee, *therefore* have I drawn thee taking pity on thee." It was because He loved us with an everlasting love that He has drawn us out of our nothingness and created us. And He has made us so that He must be ever near us. "He made me and placed His hand upon me." Yes! nearer than a mother is to her child is the great God to your soul. "Can a mother forget her child so as not to have pity upon it? yea, though she should forget I will not forget thee!" His hand must ever be upon us.

His mind must ever be thinking of us, or we should cease to be. Creation has brought our God so near to us that, as the Apostle says, "In Him we move and live and have our being."

As a bird in the air, as a fish in the sea, so is your soul in the hand of God. Now, do we realize this? Had we lived by our faith and understood we were in God's hand, should we have dared to sin? For sin is defying God. Sin is, as we have seen, rebelliously leaving the Lord our God in thought and affection. The devil holds up some forbidden fruit which he knows will allure our concupiscence, our evil propensities, our bad desires; a means of taking revenge, an opportunity of acquiring an unjust gain, the gratification of our sensuality: like Eve our passion sees the fruit, that it is fair to the eye and good to the taste and beautiful to behold, and longs to possess it. Conscience, which is the echo of the voice of God, forbids it, "Thou shalt not." Then comes the pause and the struggle: a hesitation, less and less as the sinner hardens in sin, but always sufficient to allow the will to make a conscious choice of evil, and in that deliberate choice of a great evil is mortal sin. "I know that it is wrong; I know, great God, that Thou dost say, 'Thou shalt not'; but I am my own master, I can do as I like, and I tell Thee that I will." "They have broken my yoke, they have burst my hands, they have said, 'I will not serve.'"

Now, I say, were God really at a distance in the far off heavens, as the sinner imagines Him to be, this would still be bad enough. But, remember, even when you sin, God is holding you. In very truth you sin in the hand of God. Not merely in His presence or under His eye, but whilst He holds you helpless in His hand.

God took His prophet Jeremias and shewed him the potter working at his wheel. He was fashioning vessels out of clay. But one piece was hard and would not fashion. The potter tried to mould it, but failed. At last, losing patience, he cast it from him and it broke into a thousand fragments. And said God to his prophet, "Cannot I do with you, O House of Israel, as the potter with his clay?" (Jer. xviii. 6.)

You are His, remember, body and soul. You belong to Him, for He made you. "What hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not

received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) And if you harden your heart against Him, if you will not let Him fashion you as He wishes, if you turn a deaf ear to His inspirations, may not that word be said to you, "Can not I do with thee as the potter with his clay?" "He has lifted you up with infinite love," drawing you out of nothingness, taking pity on you with infinite love, holding and supporting you in your existence. If you defy Him, I say, cannot He cast you down? And if He has not done so, is it not because He loves you and wants to pardon you? And should not this goodness of your Creator move you to penance?

When, by a holy device, the saintly hermit Paphnucius had made the sinful woman Thaïs understand that all her sins had been committed in the presence of God, she was filled with shame and remorse. She threw herself in bitterest grief at his feet and asked how she could ever atone to God for the scandal of her wicked life. He gave her a great penance. At his command she gathered together all her possessions: her robes, her ornaments, her treasures, the rewards of her sin, and of them all she made a great bonfire in the square of the city, which her life had scandalized. Then she followed him into the desert where he prepared a cell for her, in which she passed the remaining three years of her life in awful austerity. And he gave her as a penance to say this prayer: "Thou who has fashioned me, have mercy on me." It was the only prayer she had the courage to say. She dare not call on the name of God, she felt too keenly her unworthiness. She could plead no one good act in all her life of sin. But this she could say; this she could plead, she was the work of God's hand: "Thou who has fashioned me, have mercy on me." And we can plead that, too, we too have sinned. We make no boast of being His creatures as the Jews boasted they were children of Abraham. We have lost all right to that, but we are His creatures still, and if His benignity moveth us to penance, we can hope for pardon now. "Let us weep before the Lord that made us, for He is the Lord our God, and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."

WE SHOULD REPENT, BECAUSE SIN OFFENDS OUR REDEEMER

But now besides the evil of rebellion we must see in sin the bitterness of ingratitude. "Hear, oh ye heavens, and give ear, oh earth, for the Lord hath spoken, 'I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised Me'" (Is. i. 2). If God so felt the bitterness of sin under the old law, how keenly must He feel it now. Has He not manifested his love by acts expressed in terms of human tenderness? "My thoughts toward you," He had said, "are thoughts of peace." These thoughts, though indeed thoughts of love, were hidden in the bosom of God. But when the fulness of time was come and God sent His Son, then was that love at last made manifest. "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour hath appeared" (Tim. iii. 4).

It appeared in the manger at Bethlehem, in the workshop at Nazareth, in the hamlets of Galilee, in the streets of Jerusalem, and above all, on the Cross of Calvary. "And we have seen it" and have known it was the love of God for us. "He hath loved me and delivered Himself for me." Poor Jesus! As St. Alphonsus sighs, He had thought to draw us with the cords of Adam. "When I shall be lifted up I shall draw all things unto Me." And yet when He was lifted up, when He had manifested His love by dying upon the Cross for us, though the sun was darkened and the rocks were rent and all nature was thrown into confusion, man remained callous and unmoved, nay, scoffing and defiant. And what has been our attitude? "They who sin grievously crucify again to themselves the Son of God, making Him a mockery." In heart and desire, as far as in you lay, you have taken part in this cruel outrage against your God. With the Jews you have cried, "We will not have this man to rule over us. We have no king but Caesar."

Not God, but Mammon. Not Jesus, but my passion, my pride, my impurity. Let these rule over me. Away with Jesus. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, making Him a mockery. Worse than the Jews, for "had they known they would never have put to death the King of Glory." You have known you are a child of the Faith whom God Himself has enlightened. And oh, how bitterly has

God felt it. "Had an enemy done this," He cries, "I could well have borne it; but that you, one who has broken sweetmeats with me." And that has been hard to bear. "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, ye earth, I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised me." Oh, think how the good God has brought you up and exalted you. Recall to mind the church of your home and of your childhood. See there the font where you were baptized. God made you His child there. He rescued you from hell and without any merit on your part gave you a strict right to heaven. There in that confessional He cleansed your soul from its stains and washed it in His own most precious Blood: how generously and how often! And at those altar rails He prepared for you the banquet "containing in itself all sweetness," feeding your needy soul with that Bread that came down from heaven, His own Body and Blood. And after all this and a thousand other manifestations of an infinitely tender love He has to lament and cry, "They have despised me." That is what we have done when we sinned. "Hear, oh ye heavens and give ear, ye earth, I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised me." Despised our God. My dear brethren, think of this. Consider and see what an evil and bitter thing it is for thee to have left the Lord thy God. I leave you now in the presence of your God, your Creator and your Redeemer. Remember just as, if repentant, we can plead that we are His creatures and be sure of obtaining pardon from our Creator, so even more efficaciously still can we plead the Precious Blood with our Redeemer and hope for mercy.

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

SUBJECT

CONSCIENCE

TEXT

I am not conscious to myself of anything: yet I am not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord.—1 Cor. iv. 4.

Analysis

Introduction. In to-day's Epistle St. Paul is condemning the factions and rivalries that existed among the faithful at Corinth. Losing sight of the necessity of adhering to the faith of Christ as taught by His infallible Church, the Christians there were attaching themselves to certain different leaders, while setting themselves against others. Some said they were of Apollo, others were of Peter, still others were of Paul, and so on. The Apostle rebukes the Corinthians for these divisions, and tells them not to judge the ministers of the Church, or to set one against another but rather to look upon all "as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God." For himself, he cares not how, or by whom he is judged among men, for his conscience is clear and at peace. And even if his conscience were wrong he says it does not pertain to men to judge him, since God is his judge, and God alone can see the heart and correctly judge the conscience.

I. The meaning of conscience. 1. There are two rules or norms according to which a person must shape his conduct, namely, the Commandments of God and his own conscience. 2. Conscience is the judgment of the practical reason which decides that a particular action is in conformity with or opposition to

God's law. 3. We are never permitted to act contrary to the dictates of our conscience, for as St. Paul says, all that is not of faith, *i.e.*, according to one's conscience, is sinful (Rom. xiv. 23). If we eat certain food, thinking it is forbidden when it is not forbidden, we sin, says the Apostle. 4. But while one must always act according to the dictates of his conscience, it does not follow that in doing so he may not, under certain conditions, be guilty of sin, for there is such a thing as a false conscience.

II. Various kinds of conscience. 1. Conscience may be true, erroneous or doubtful. It is *true* when it is in conformity with God's law; it is *doubtful* when it hesitates or is unable to decide whether a certain action is right or wrong; it is *erroneous* when it is out of harmony with the divine law. 2. It is never lawful to act with a doubtful conscience, because that would be carelessly running the risk of doing the wrong thing, and so of sinning. If a person has to act without delay and cannot settle his doubt, he should seek good advice if possible; and if this is impossible, he should do what appears the most reasonable at the time, waiting till later to settle the matter. 3. A person's conscience may be in error with or without his own fault; if without his own fault, he does not sin by following it, *e.g.*, if a person should eat meat on Friday not knowing it is Friday, or should miss Mass on a Holyday not knowing it is a Holyday. With regard to keeping the Commandments of God, however, no person of ordinary intelligence can be ignorant without his own fault. It is plain to every sound mind that God and parents must be honored, that murder, theft, impurity, stealing, etc., are wrong. 4. When one's conscience is in error through his own fault, because he does not wish to know what is right, or because he has neglected to use the ordinary diligence and interest to determine what is right, he has a false conscience and is in bad faith, and is guilty of sin every time he acts according to such a conscience. 5. Two kinds of erroneous conscience are especially harmful: a *lax* conscience and a *scrupulous* conscience. The former makes one think that grave sins are only slight matters, or even virtuous deeds. The

scrupulous conscience, on the contrary, is one that sees sin in everything, or which magnifies mere trifles into enormous crimes. We must not, however, confound a scrupulous conscience with a *timorous* or delicate conscience, which is careful, not only to avoid grave matters, but even slight offenses.

Exhortation. 1. Parents and superiors should endeavor, by instructions and good example, so to educate their children and subjects that these may be able to know what is right and what is wrong. Those who have not had the advantage of parents and instructors should seek good advice and necessary information. 2. Means calculated to form a careful conscience are: (a) prayer to God for light; (b) practice of virtue; (c) pious examination of conscience and frequentation of the Sacrament of Penance. 3. The chief means of overcoming a scrupulous conscience are: obedience and docility to the advice of the spiritual director. 4. Remember that we are now writing in the book of our conscience the sentence that Jesus Christ will pronounce upon us.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Fourth Sunday after Epiphany)

Sermons

Conscience

BY THE REV. J. H. HEALY, O.P., P.G.

Terse, indeed, is St. Paul's expression of what he thinks concerning what is being said of him. Statements were flying thick and thin, but they did not disturb him, although he knew that he must not be entirely indifferent to the effect his actions had on others. Anybody who essays the rôle of teacher, especially if the teaching involves the duty of correcting the proud and self-opinionated, is certain to be the storm center of criticism as St. Paul was. Yet it caused him very little worry. He was careful to let the people know that he is acting not on impulse, but through conscience and he is anxious moreover that they should know that his notion of right and wrong is based not on personal

whims, or fancy, or expediency, or a desire to please an individual or group of individuals, but on the immutable law of God. True he had used his own reason in formulating his law of action, but this he compared with the law of God, and in so doing he teaches us the worth and the use of conscience.

WHAT CONSCIENCE REALLY IS

Conscience in its strictest sense, according to St. Thomas, is the application of knowledge to action. It is the mind of man determining whether an action is good or bad; whether something should be done or left undone. It is the teacher of the soul. It approves or condemns. In arriving at its decision conscience uses the results of teaching and experience. The Christian recalls the commandments of God, the life and teaching of Him who was the Way, the Truth and the Life, the precepts of the Church, the lessons learned in church, or home, or school.

One of the choicest gifts of God to man is conscience. It is really His voice speaking to our hearts. No monitor can be more vigilant in warning us against evil; no parent more insistent on the doing of good always; no friend more anxious to insinuate the helpful and to encourage what is virtuous. Conscience is omnipresent. To the man tossed about by the angry waves in the ocean storm; to the man who would find escape from the trackless desert; to him who is almost deafened by the din and roar of business of pleasure or sin, conscience speaks clearly and unmistakably.

DOUBTFUL CONSCIENCE

True, man is not infallible; but it is assuring and consoling to us to know that when we have used our best efforts to find out what conscience urges that, no matter whether the act be virtuous or not, we shall be rewarded for work well done. It is not the mere doing, but the reason for doing which gives merit to action. When we have acted according to conscience we are prompted not so much by the act itself as by a desire to do good. It is possible that at times the very thing we do is a thing most strictly forbidden, but this is not known to us. We recalled our teaching, our experience; we tried to compare the action with what we

thought was commanded or forbidden, and we believed that here and now virtue demanded that the action be performed. For the same reason if at times we do what is innocent or harmless, but while doing it we are under the impression that it is wrong in itself, or that it is forbidden, we are to condemn ourselves as sinning, because we acted against what we thought was right.

TRUE CONSCIENCE

Is is very necessary that from earliest days we expend every effort in trying to acquire a true conscience. And by true conscience we mean one that almost by instinct knows the will of God. No matter what action or course of action presents itself, no matter how far from the ordinary it may be, a true conscience will always prescribe what is essentially right. A true conscience covers all the affairs of one's life, business, social, political, as well as religious. It will urge a man to be scrupulously honest in his business as in his private affairs; it will make him as mindful of the rights and feeling of his inferiors as he is mindful of those of his peers and superiors. It will make him respect the name and reputation of a political adversary, as it does of a social friend. It will prevent his using means that are not intrinsically honorable to accomplish a purpose, no matter how laudable it may be in itself. It will not permit him to take undue advantage of any weakness on the part of another. Rather will it force him to protect the weak and the mentally deficient. A true conscience will provoke a man to perfect the gifts with which God has endowed him. It will make him understand that these are to be used not only for his own improvement but for the happiness of others. It will make him realize his opportunity whenever there is a chance to do good. A true conscience will keep a man aware of what are his obligations as a soldier of Jesus Christ. It will make him feel a personal responsibility for the spread and the defense of the kingdom of God on earth, the Catholic Church.

WHEN NOT CERTAIN

Unfortunately, not every one of us has been so trained in the knowledge of the law of God that we are not at times con-

fronted with doubt or difficulty. Situations arise which are beyond our control. Local conditions sometimes mean change of law, change of custom. What is a holy day here is but a day of devotion there. A day of abstinence here does not oblige there. Before performing any action concerning which we have doubt, we should seek advice from those competent to give. We should study as thoroughly as possible the reasons suggesting or forbidding, and if with all this we are still unable to form a sound judgment, and it is not permissible or convenient to defer the action, we should conform to that opinion which seems to be the more reasonable. It is obvious, indeed, that the circumstances are necessarily few which demand immediate action. To act heedlessly under such circumstances, will expose one to the danger of sin. This would be acting with what we call a doubtful conscience. A person who errs trying to form a true conscience is always eager and ready to rectify any wrong that may have been caused by acting with this doubtful conscience.

Conscience is called erroneous when it suggests or permits actions that are forbidden. A conscience may be in error with or without fault. If one has made every effort to acquire knowledge of law and fact and has been unable to arrive at the truth, such a one cannot be condemned for such actions as may result. They come not from malice but from ignorance. One needs trouble himself little concerning a conscience that is in error through ignorance, because the ignorance which excuses can extend to few of our ordinary actions. One can hardly allege that he did not know that it was wrong to steal, to kill, to be impure, to refuse honor to God or to one's parents, these are dictates of common sense.

FALSE CONSCIENCE

An erroneous is called a false conscience if the ignorance is due to a deliberate neglect to acquire knowledge, or to an effort to make the law of God accommodate itself to the lower standards of a certain set of people. In a day when there is so much loose thinking and when a desire to be broadminded makes some flippant, and some almost blasphemous, it is easy to imbibe notions that affect conscience. In certain circles there is a tendency to

condone sin and to apologize for many of the lapses of society. Reasons are given which really discredit one's intelligence. What we are too cowardly to oppose, we may gradually begin to believe to be not seriously wrong, and in a short time find ourselves doing the thing which we once would have condemned in self which in our broadmindedness we tolerated in another. Careless reading, too, is responsible for many a false conscience. Many wish to appear learned, to cultivate in a social way the acquaintance of many who are openly atheistic in their views; they dabble in a literature that they do not understand, or whose sophistry they are unable to detect until gradually their views of life, notions of right and wrong are changed. Conscience meanwhile is being benumbed with this association, until at last it justifies what it once abhorred. To-day, many a person who proclaimed loudly the soundness of the position of the Church on divorce, is actually living in open adultery, and her false conscience justifies her. This is the conscience commonly called lax.

THE SCRUPULOUS CONSCIENCE

There is a kind of erroneous conscience disturbing alike to confessor and penitent—the scrupulous. By this is meant the wilful exaggeration of the malice of a sin, the seeing evil in actions where none exists or the effort to make an act vicious on account of a motive. Sometimes scrupulosity is due to some physical defect. Effort, of course, should be made to remedy this. When it is not due to physical defect it is due to obstinacy in one's opinions or a failure to follow the advice of a confessor. A timorous or exact conscience is very different: it really sees evil, shrinks from it, makes one dread contact with it.

There is no finite happiness that can equal the joy of a good, clear conscience. It is, therefore, the duty of all entrusted with the instruction of character to strive for the formation of a good conscience. Attention to the individual, painstaking care in the beginning, will be a great help. No matter who or what we are, we should never tire in our effort to procure a good conscience. It should be the object of our constant prayer—"God grant that I may know Thy law": it should be our aim daily to make a study of our conscience to find it is seeing and judging things as God

does: and when we receive our Saviour in Holy Communion we should ask that the same zeal that prompted His life and the knowledge that enlightened Him be shared in by us. To receive the sacraments frequently will enable us to say what Paul said, "I live! No, Christ lives in me." They who in the past have tortured themselves and others should be firm in their resolve to accept the advice of confessor and force themselves to act in conformity.

Conscience is our Book of Life—its pages are filled by none but us. The deeds written there are reflected on the great Book—they determine the sentence that awaits us at death.

False Conscience

BY THE REV. W. GRAHAM

There shall arise false Christs and false prophets

INTRODUCTION

Listening to our Lord's warning words the mind naturally reverts to the many false teachers who, by word, example, or writing lead men astray. But, as in Christ's own words, "a man's worst enemies are those of his own household," so the most dangerous of all false prophets is within us—in a wilfully false, or deluded conscience. It is a melancholy reflection but true, that the human conscience—the very source and fountain-head of morality in the individual soul—the index and regulator of human conduct, given by God to guide us on the path to heaven, may become, by human perversity, by the abuse of God's gift of free will, darkened and perverted, and instead of a faithful guide, turn out a false one, luring us from one abyss of vice to another. "Wo to you," says the prophet, speaking of those who fall into this state, "that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Isa. v. 20). That this misfortune may not be ours let us briefly reflect:

IN WHAT SENSE CONSCIENCE IS THE RULE OF CONDUCT

Every human being responsible to his Creator is endowed with a conscience, viz., a sort of inner light indicating to him the essen-

tial difference between right and wrong, good and evil, and though varying in individuals according to their religion, intelligence and education, yet it conveys to all—even the rudest—a more or less perfect knowledge of God's law, sufficient at all events to make them answerable for their conduct. Now, the law of God is the outward, eternal, never-changing standard of right and wrong; and in so far only is conscience a safe and trustworthy guide inasmuch as it accords with, is conformed to and harmonizes with this divine standard. If it swerves therefrom, either wilfully or unwilfully, by one's own fault or otherwise, it is wrong or erroneous. Conscience is, therefore, the knowing and applying of God's law to the ever-varying thoughts, words, and actions of human life. It is not sufficient of itself; it does not dispense with the necessity of an external divine teacher to point out our obligations and duties. On the contrary, we help and learn from one another; and God has appointed an infallible Church external to us to be our guide in the difficult path of morals as well as of belief. Nay, when in doubt, ignorance, darkness, or difficulty, conscience itself suggests the duty of seeking for help, light, and guidance wherever they can be found. With this limitation, therefore, we may safely say that to each individual soul, conscience is a divine teacher, a divine monitor, and a divine judge.

CONSCIENCE, A TEACHER

It is the medium through which we frame our conduct in accordance with the divine law, pointing out what is right and wrong in the various details of life. Hence all classes, high and low, learned and ignorant, appeal to their conscience as a teacher; and none are excused in wrong-doing, as it is a teacher that resides in every human breast. The very Gentiles, as St. Paul says, ignorant of revelation, yet "shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another" (Rom. ii. 15).

CONSCIENCE, A MONITOR

Conscience is also a divine monitor ever making its voice heard when wrong is done or duty neglected. It can no more be stifled

than the warning cry of physical pain, which tells us that something is wrong with the bodily organism. It ever persists in pointing out what is morally right and binding, sternly indicating the path of duty, even though it be a narrow and a thorny one. Just as a clock ever goes steadily on, reminding us of fleeting time, ever marking the hours that pass, so does conscience ever whisper to us the binding force of duty and God's law, heedless of the warring and jarring voice of interest and pleasure and all the other false prophets around us.

CONSCIENCE, A JUDGE

Furthermore, conscience is to each one of us a judge—a judge, too, that we can neither bribe nor silence—a judge who sternly and unrelentingly will decide against us in all acts of wrong-doing or neglect of duty, even though all the world were to condone or applaud our conduct. "If thou do ill shall not sin forthwith be present at the door?" (Gen. iv. 7.) Nay, it will abide there if not pacified, as the tormenting worm that never dies—the enemy with whom, if we are wise, our Lord counsels us "to make peace" whilst we "are on the way," *i.e.*, in this life.

WE MUST FOLLOW OUR CONSCIENCE

Now, from this it follows that in all deliberate moral actions we must be guided by our conscience at least to the extent of never wilfully acting against it, as it is to us personally the voice of God and the internal rule by which the morality of our conduct is measured. Furthermore, we should always respect our neighbors' consciences, even when opposed to our own, and never take upon ourselves the office of judge of their conduct, for "Who art thou," says St. Paul, "that judgest another man's servant?" (Rom. xiv. 4.) To his own Lord he standeth or falleth.

Indeed, the same external act may be separately right or wrong, according to the state of conscience of those who take part in it, or their motives in so doing. The Roman soldiers who put our Lord to death, acting in obedience to their officers and on the supposition that they were dealing with an ordinary Jewish criminal, were excusable. They merely did their duty as soldiers

and state officials; whereas, the Jewish priests and people, knowing, or at least in duty bound to know, that Christ was just, holy, and innocent, moved also by hatred and the desire of vengeance, were guilty of the crime of deicide.

In case of reasonable and serious doubt as to whether a certain line of conduct is right or wrong, we cannot conscientiously act till the doubt is cleared up or settled. And if we cannot solve the difficulty, we must consult those more enlightened than ourselves; seek light from those who represent the Church, made our unerring guide in the hard ways of morals and faith.

In the sense thus indicated is conscience the true, unerring guide of conduct.

HOW CONSCIENCE MAY BE PERVERTED

But often, alas! this divine monitor—this sacred index of duty, like so many other God-like gifts—like those of intelligence and free-will, is corrupted—perverted. It is indeed true that the law of God, the eternal standard of right and wrong, or moral good and evil, by which conscience regulates our behavior, never varies, never changes—like God Himself, it is the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow; but the conscience that applies it may vary and change. The light of God's sun in the heavens is never dimmed—it is ever shining; but dense clouds may obscure it—the eye that perceives it may be diseased or darkened—the instrument that conveys the light to the eye may be deranged or broken; so, too, with conscience and the law. By nature men are born conscientious beings—just as they are born rational. Even the wicked like to justify their conduct to themselves or others, *i.e.*, they naturally wish to be esteemed conscientious, and as they will not follow a true conscience, they set up a false one—they frame a standard of conduct, of right and wrong, to suit themselves. "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins," says the Almighty (Isa. xliii. 24). You have abused the sacred name of conscience to justify unworthy deeds. "Yea the hour cometh," says our divine Lord, "that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God" (John xvi. 2).

Men, *e.g.*, are by nature religious beings, and as a body feel the crying need of practising some form of worship or other. Men,

in very early days, finding that the worship of the one true God imposed too many restraints, required more self-sacrifice than they were willing to yield, set up patterns of their own vices and called them gods—Bel and Jupiter and Venus and the rest—and then knelt down and adored them. Hence the origin more or less of all the false, man-made religions of the world. So is it with what we call a false, seared, or deluded conscience. All men, as I observed, like to be deemed conscientious, and finding a true, an enlightened, and well-regulating conscience too severe a judge, too prying a monitor, frame a more accommodating one for themselves. For remember "There is a way that seemeth to a man right and the ends thereof lead to death" (Prov. xvi. 25). God did not give us a mind proof against error and vice; no more did he give us a conscience proof against deception. All these powers, mind and heart and conscience, must be molded and trained and educated in the right way. If a Christian chooses to remain in wilful ignorance of what it is his bounden duty to know—if he is blindly obstinate against light and truth—if he listens only to the voice of his own individual or national prejudices against plain reason and good sense—if he frequents bad company, reads bad books, studies anti-religious and immoral literature, how can he hope to preserve a true, God-inspired and enlightened conscience? All these influences, singly or combined, will pervert or stifle conscience, blunt a man's moral perceptions, and inevitably make him lose the fear or even the discernment of evil. "The wicked man when he is come into the depth of sin, contemneth" (Prov. xviii. 3).

HOW TO CORRECT A PERVERTED CONSCIENCE

Thank God, however, the eternal principles of virtue, justice, and truth, the perception of the essential difference between good and evil, right and wrong, are too deeply engraven in the human heart to be altogether erased. Even from the depths of what seems a hopelessly hardened conscience, a divine voice is heard calling out in this wilderness of sin for repentance and reform. The inextinguishable voice of true conscience cries aloud, as in St. Augustine, sunk in the mire of sin, for healing, light and guidance.

1. WE MUST SEEK GUIDANCE IN THE CHURCH

Now to heal a perverted and preserve a well-regulated conscience, to keep this clock of the heart in good working order, two things are necessary. First, in the principles that regulate our conduct or behavior we must look for guidance not to the false prophets of the day, the secular teachers and thinkers and human religion-makers with their false lights, their ever-shifting, every-varying, and contradictory opinions, but to the pillar and ground of truth—the holy Church of God—firmly set upon the mountain top or the lighthouse on the sea-girt shore, to be our unerring guide in belief and practice—the hard, trackless paths of faith and morals. In her manuals of instruction, in her prayer-books and catechisms, we must seek for light and leading, and that, too, humbly and submissively, even as little children, if we would "enter into the kingdom of heaven," *i.e.*, in this world the peace and joy of a well-regulated conscience.

2. WE MUST APPLY TO OURSELVES THE SAME STANDARD WE APPLY TO OTHERS

The second rule is to apply to ourselves in everyday life the same standard of right and wrong that we apply to others. How quick we are in seeing through the flimsy veil and of raveling the hollow arguments by which men strive to mask their vices and justify as blameless what we clearly see to be theft, avarice, lust, envy, or lying, no matter under what specious names they may be cloaked. Well, let us be equally keen sighted and rigorous in our own case. "For in that we condemn our neighbor (justly it may be) are we not condemning ourselves?" The law of conscience, as the law of love, must be the same for all. Acting on these two simple rules, we shall preserve an enlightened and well-regulated conscience that will be to us what God's law was to the prophet—"a light to our feet and a guide to our steps"; or what the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day was to the Israelites—a sign guiding us safely through the desert of this life to the promised land of the next.

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FEAST OF CHRISTMAS

SUBJECT

THE VIRTUE OF HOPE

TEXT

Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.—Titus ii. 13.

Analysis

Introduction. For thousands of years before the birth of Christ, even from the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of paradise, when a Redeemer of the human race was first promised, all faithful souls looked forward with anxious eyes, hoping that it might be their privilege to see the Saviour upon earth, or at least to have part in the glorious kingdom which He would inaugurate. Many kings and prophets and wise men yearned for the realization of this cherished hope, and yet had to pass from this lower scene before the time of its fulfillment arrived. It is our privilege as Christians to reap the blessings of that event for which so many longed in vain, for Christ has come, and by His grace we are members of His Church, the kingdom He established here below, sharing in all its wondrous graces and blessings, and heirs to the glories of His Kingdom above. We have realized the hope of so

many others, but there is for us a higher, more blessed prospect still—that of reigning hereafter with our new-born Saviour in the unending kingdom of heaven.

I. The nature of hope. 1. Hope is a supernatural and theological virtue by which we desire and expect eternal life which God has promised, together with the means necessary to attain it. It is called a *virtue*, because it gives us the strength to do good; it is supernatural, because it is a divine gift and not the result of our own labors; it is termed *theological*, because its immediate object is God. 2. The goods we hope for are eternal life, grace, and temporal blessings as helps to eternal benefits. 3. The reasons for our hope are the goodness of God, His promises, and the merits of Christ. 4. Hope should possess the following qualities: (a) it should be *firm, i.e.*, it should exclude all discouragement and anxiety; (b) it should be *humble, i.e.*, it should be joined with a salutary fear of offending God, and a distrust of our own weakness (Lev. xix. 14).

II. The necessity of hope. 1. This virtue is indispensable to salvation, since God has commanded it (John xv. 5; Ps. lxi. 9; Rom. viii. 24). 2. The precept of hope forbids the contrary vices of presumption and despair. 3. Despair is a voluntary abandonment of all hope of salvation, or of the means necessary to attain it. It arises from a realization of one's wicked life, of his infidelity to good resolutions, or from a fear of the difficulties of leading a Christian life. Despair is a mortal sin, and the source of every kind of excess and wickedness. 4. Presumption is the rash expectation of obtaining salvation without the employment of the necessary means. Examples of this sin are: (a) those who act as if they did not need God's help; (b) those who expect to get to heaven without keeping the Commandments; (c) those who think it sufficient to avoid evil without doing good; (d) those who rely on the fact that there are many worse than they are; (e) those who, while leading a life of sin, rely wholly on exterior practices of piety such as saying certain prayers, going to confession without contrition or purpose of amendment, and the like;

(f) those who are counting on a death-bed repentance. 5. The precept of hope requires that one should make acts of this virtue when tempted to despair, discouragement, etc.; it is useful to make acts of hope frequently, since this wins God's favor and is a great source of strength.

Exhortation. Make use of the means of strengthening hope, which are: (a) to ask God for this virtue; (b) to meditate frequently on the reasons we have for confidence, and the rewards attached to the virtue of hope (Heb. x. 35; (c) often to make acts of hope; (d) to labor as if all depended on ourselves, and pray as if all depended on God.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermons

Hope, the Christian's Strength

BY THE REV. E. F. SUTCLIFFE, S.J.

INTRODUCTION

It is on record that at the time of a severe epidemic in Paris, a certain Catholic lay dying in the most abject poverty. The priest who came to administer to him those Sacraments that speed the Christian soul from the death of this life to the life that knows no death, found the sufferer lying in a room bare not merely of comforts but of all the necessaries of existence. There was neither chair nor table. The sick man lay in a corner on some straw covered with a few rags. The only other objects in the room were some tools, a hatchet and two saws, hanging on the wall. What goods he had possessed had been sold at the beginning of his illness. Such a piteous sight in a city of fashion and of luxury might well lead to the expectation that the poor victim of disease and poverty would turn against the priest with curses and revilings. How could the God whose worship he preached be good and kind when He allowed such suffering? How could he be

asked to pay respect to Him when he could not pay for the necessaries of life? But, by the grace of God, such were not his sentiments. He had been poor, and had been obliged to toil for his livelihood; but never had he repined nor envied others their more prosperous condition, their large share of this world's goods. He had always been happy, for he had always been contented. And he assured the priest that, should his life be spared, he would resume his work as before till God's time came, for he said, "I know that if I please Him now, He will take care of me during life—hasn't He promised that, Father?—and when the time comes for me to die, He will make me happy in heaven." That, my dear brethren, is a magnificent example of the power of Christian hope. It had transformed and vivified the life of that poor artisan, just as it was one of the life-springs in his patron, the carpenter of Nazareth. Hope is powerful for good; it is even essential for salvation, for distorted or exaggerated it becomes presumption; and its negation is despair. It is therefore a most important factor in our own spiritual life, and it will be well to direct our thoughts to it this morning, to recall its nature, its characteristics, its potency.

NATURE OF HOPE

Hope is a Christian virtue. It belongs to the Christian and to the Christian only, for it is of its essence supernatural, and possible only in the life of grace. It is a supernatural virtue because it regards something totally above and beyond our nature, something to which of ourselves and of our nature we have no claim at all, and to which we shall attain only by the gift of almighty God—that is to say, it looks to eternal happiness in the vision of almighty God. That for which we hope is the Beatific Vision, or God as the source of our supreme and undying happiness in heaven. Such reward in heaven is above our nature, above our needs, above our deserts; and that it is to be ours is therefore of the pure gifts or grace of God. Hope, therefore, is a supernatural virtue. Of course, all virtue in a Catholic living in the state of grace is supernatural, because all is raised to the supernatural order by charity and the life of grace.

But not all virtue is in itself and essentially supernatural. The

virtues of truthfulness, of kindness, of courage are in themselves natural, and may and do flourish in the natural man, that is in the man unregenerated by grace. The atheist and the infidel may and do so possess these virtues in more or less degree. Does not the heathen love those that love him, and do good to those who do good to him? And in so doing they are practising natural virtue; and natural virtue has its natural reward. He who is kind is rewarded by the kindness of his fellow men, and he who is surly receives their frowns. He who abstains from excess in the good things of the table is rewarded by resultant good health, as intemperance is punished even more surely by resultant ill-health. It may be that when this world is no more, and we are privileged to grope no longer darkly after mysteries but to understand something of God's dealings with men, this natural virtue will help to explain many an enigma that puzzles us now. Why do the wicked prosper? Why does the Just Ruler of the world allow such inequality in the temporal fortune of good and of evil? It may be that in some cases men have here the reward of their natural virtue, for no man is so depraved as to be without all natural virtue. But these same virtues, which in others are natural and can earn but a natural reward, are in the Catholic raised to the supernatural order, because his whole life is supernatural; and they merit a supernatural reward. All increase of such virtue in the Catholic merits a greater reward in heaven. The natural virtues are therefore the common property of all men, because they spring from human nature, though, as has been explained, in the baptised soul unsullied by grievous sin they are raised above themselves and participate in the life of grace divinely given to the soul.

How Hope differs from Faith and Charity

But the virtue of hope differs from these. It is in itself supernatural, and belongs to the baptised and to the baptised only; for Baptism is in the providence of God, the initiation of the soul to the supernatural life of grace. It is in Baptism that original sin is swept away, and the supernatural grace of God bestowed upon the soul, in virtue of which it can aspire to the Beatific Vision. So that though all men may be said to hope in some sense of the

term, as for fine weather, for a safe journey, for a happy marriage and the like, it is only the baptised who can be said to hope with the Christian hope of which we are speaking. The virtue of Hope, then, is something entirely special, with a very definite signification: and its primary object is eternal life, the possession of God after death as the source of our eternal happiness. Secondarily, we hope with the supernatural gift of hope for all those means of grace which will enable us to attain the Beatific Vision. As the Beatific Vision is promised only to the baptised, it is clear that they alone can hope for it; and as the Beatific Vision is itself supernatural, the virtue of hope by which we expect and yearn for it is also supernatural.

Hope, further, is one of the theological virtues. These three virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity are so called, as St. Thomas teaches, for the triple reason that they have God for their object, inasmuch as by them we are rightly directed to God, that they are infused into us by God alone, and that our knowledge of these virtues is derived solely from the Divine revelation of the Holy Scriptures. It is in Baptism that these virtues are infused into the soul by almighty God, for it is thus that the soul is raised to the supernatural life of grace; and they are infused or freely bestowed because no effort of man alone could ever avail to win for himself these virtues that surpass the strength of his own nature. This is a truth that should be deeply graven in our hearts, that by the mercy of God we have been singled out as the temples wherein the Holy Ghost dwells in His grace, that by this fact the Catholic lives a life immeasurably above that of his fellow men (a proud thought whereof the glory belongs to God), and that the results of this life of grace on earth is to be the life of glory hereafter. We are the sons of predestination. It is to us that the kingdom of heaven is promised. Please God, many outside the visible unity of the Church will through the boundless love of almighty God attain to the eternal happiness of heaven, but it can only be in so far as they belong to the soul of the Church.

The second reason for which faith, hope and charity are called theological is that they all three have God for their object, but in different ways. The virtue of charity causes man to adhere to God for His own sake, uniting the mind of man to God through

the affection of love; but faith and hope cause man to adhere to God as to a principle or source whence flow certain benefits. It is from God that man obtains the knowledge of the truth and the attainment of perfect happiness. Faith, therefore, causes man to adhere to God, inasmuch as He is the cause or origin of our knowledge of truth, for we believe that what is told us by God is true. Lastly, hope causes man to adhere to God in that He is the principle of our happiness, inasmuch, that is, as through hope we rely on the Divine aid to gain eternal happiness, faith, hope, and charity all have God for their object, but in different ways. Faith is seated primarily in the intellect, hope and charity in the will; for by faith we give assent to the revelation of God, by charity the will is united to God by love, by hope the soul expects and yearns for the attainment of perfect happiness in the eternal possession of God in heaven. It was in the exercise of hope that St. Paul exclaimed, "I long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." By charity the will is united to God and adheres to God Himself for His own sake; by hope the will is united to God and adheres to God under a particular aspect, as the source and origin of our eternal happiness.

THE CERTAINTY OF HOPE

Faith and hope are closely allied in another way. We know by faith that the reward and happiness of heaven are destined by God for those who live faithful to His grace in this life. "Come, ye blessed of my Father," our Lord will say to the just, "possess the kingdom which I have prepared for you from the beginning of the world." We know by faith that heaven is destined for God's faithful servants, and the infallible voice of the Church tells us that the canonised saints are already in possession of this reward. The existence of heaven and its actual enjoyment by some of God's elect are therefore matters of faith. That we, too, will receive the same rewards of eternal life if we die in the state of grace is likewise a matter of faith, and is a proposition that partakes of the certainty of faith. That God on His side will not fail, that He will be true to His promises is also certain and of faith. It is absolutely certain that He will give us eternal happiness in heaven, if we lead good lives and die in His grace, and that

He will give to each of us grace sufficient to save our souls. What, then, is left for hope? In what sense is our salvation not sure and certain, since God's truth and goodness can never fail? The danger and the uncertainty lie with ourselves. *We* can fail; we all know the weakness of our nature. The grace which is strictly sufficient for salvation does not meet with response from all owing to our fickleness; and we put our trust in God (and we know in whom we pin our trust) confident that He will give us abundant and superabundant means of grace to enable us to overcome all obstacles, even that of our own treacherous weakness, in order at last to merit by His mercy the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision.

Our trust reposes not on self, not on man, but on God. He is the true warrant of our hope. Based on Him, His power and goodness, our hope is firmly set upon a rock and cannot be shaken, but if we trust in ourselves our hope is but a fickle reed, that is easily broken and crushed. To trust in self or in man is presumption; and to throw ourselves on the protection of God for safety in dangers which we have brought upon ourselves wantonly and without reason is presumption. The old saying that God helps those who help themselves has a deep spiritual meaning; for to allow ourselves to drift into occasions of danger, to do nothing to help ourselves to spiritual safety, under the impression that God is good and will take care of us and not suffer us to be lost, is to be guilty of presumption. It is to presume on God's kindness and to look for help and grace to which we have no right. God will never leave us without grace to resist all temptations which come upon us through no fault of ours; but if we wilfully run into danger, that is, into temptation, we cannot expect God to exercise this power in any special way to protect and save us.

SINS AGAINST HOPE

It is recorded of a monk living in the desert in the early days of persecution, that he conceived the idea of going voluntarily to martyrdom, of presenting himself before the judges as a Christian and of offering his life for Christ. The thought was noble and generous, but he was warned by his spiritual father not to rely on his own strength, that in the face of pain and death he

would lose heart and deny the Lord he sought to serve, and that if God wished him to become a martyr, He would bring about that consummation in His own way, and would then give him the strength necessary to bear torture and death. Nevertheless, the monk went his own way, but soon returned sorrowing to the desert, for he had denied his Lord. He had trusted in himself, and his own strength did not, could not suffice to overcome. To go further back in the history of Christianity we may be instructed by the fall of the Apostles. One of the most striking characteristics of the Gospel narration is its open frankness, its free and simple confession of the weakness of human nature even in our Lord's chosen Apostles and companions. We know how the Apostles all abandoned our Lord in His Passion, how St. Peter denied Him. Yet Thomas had declared that he would go to Jerusalem to die with our Lord; and Peter had affirmed that though all should deny Him, yet would not he. Yet in the event he did deny our Lord, and Thomas with the rest abandoned Him. Peter and Thomas had trusted too much to themselves. Later, taught by this terrible experience, they knew that of themselves they were powerless but could do all in Him that strengtheneth: and their glorious deaths for the cause of Christ were the crown of their hope and trust in God.

PRESUMPTION

What is the lesson of this for ourselves? First, that whatever be the difficulties by which we are surrounded, we shall never be left by Almighty God to our own strength, we shall always have help and grace from Him to enable us to overcome. All that happens to us through the agency of nature or of other human beings happens with His permission and under the direction of His providence. We know in Whom we trust, that He is faithful. He will never leave us unaided when danger to our souls comes upon us through no fault of ours. Secondly, that if we wilfully and unnecessarily place ourselves in the danger of committing mortal sin, we place ourselves outside the scope of God's ordinary providence, and we have no right to expect Him to take extraordinary measures to save us. To do so is to be guilty of presumption.

DESPAIR

The sin of presumption is a sin against hope, for presumption is an exaggerated or distorted hope. It is hope without adequate ground of hope, for the object of hope is primarily the Beatific Vision, the possession of God as the source of our eternal happiness, and, secondarily, the means that will enable us to obtain that end, but the folly and the guilt of presumption lie precisely in trusting for supernatural aid in circumstances in which we have deprived ourselves of the claim to it. The second sin against hope is the sin of despair, the rejection of all hope, the abandonment of all trust in God, and the conviction of the impossibility of obtaining the eternal happiness of heaven. Of all sins despair is the most unreasoning and the most unreasonable. A moment's thought shows its absurdity, yet, unfortunately, it is possible for a soul so to wrap itself in its own blind imaginings as to fall into this terrible sin. When man fell, what did Almighty God do in His love? He sent His only-begotten Son to give His life for the salvation of man; and theologians teach that the second Person of the Blessed Trinity would have become man and given His life to save the soul of a single man. He desires not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live. No matter whether a sinner has been guilty of one mortal sin or of many mortal sins, Almighty God longs to receive him back to His love and favor. His one desire is the salvation of man. How could He wish to see the soul of a man lost when the loss of a soul means that the ransom paid by His divine Son has been rejected and refused, and His Blood spilt in vain? Unhappy Judas is the classic instance of despair. The very fact that he was one on whom our Lord had showered special graces was a reason the more not for, but against despair; for Jesus never tires in loving kindness, never wearies of doing good, of forgiving. It is a consoling truth we should never forget that no matter into how deep a slough of misery and sin we may fall, there is always room for hope, there is never reason for despair. Our Lord is always ready to forgive.

Besides the sin of presumption and the sin of despair, is there any other danger to our hope? There is a danger, but it is indirect: for we may lose our hope through loss of faith. Faith is

the groundwork and the support of hope. Without faith hope cannot exist. And consequently all danger to our faith is indirectly a danger to our hope. We cannot reject or deny the faith, and get hope for its reward. In another and quite different sense, sin is the great danger and obstacle to our hope. For the man who dies in mortal sin there can be no hope; but, on the other hand, to fall into sin is no reason to give up hope, as we have seen, for that would be to despair, and the constant desire of our Blessed Lord is the salvation of the sinner. Remember the joy that pervades the court of heaven when one sinner returns to God in repentance. But though sin committed, however serious, is no reason for abandoning hope, yet sin is the one evil we should fear, as sin and sin alone could ever be an obstacle to our attaining that eternal happiness for which we hope. So the consideration of hope brings us round to the fear, and the hatred, and the avoidance of sin.

POWER OF HOPE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Lastly, let us reflect for a moment on the power of hope in our lives. It is a strong incentive to reject temptation to reflect that to commit grievous sin is to give up the right to heaven. That right may be restored, as we know, by confession and absolution, or by perfect contrition; but sooner or later, life comes to a close, and how does the sinner know he will be given time to repent and to confess? How does he know he will not be cut off in his sin? Constantly to reflect on our hope is a powerful stimulus to live a virtuous life. More, the Catholic has in his hope an ever-present source of comfort in times of distress and of sadness. The troubles and the pains of life fade into insignificance when we contemplate the eternal glory for which we hope, and reflect that these trials are but the condition and the price, painful but quickly paid, of that unending happiness with God in heaven.

Hope and Confidence in God

BY THE REV. ARTHUR DEVINE, C.P.

THE NATURE OF HOPE

The virtue of hope "is a supernatural gift of God by which we firmly trust that God will give us eternal life and all the means necessary to obtain it if we do what He requires of us." It has for its object God as the supreme good to be possessed by us hereafter, or, in other words, eternal beatitude; and, also, the means necessary for obtaining that beatitude, namely, grace and the virtues that accompany grace. The motives of hope are the infinite goodness of God toward us, His omnipotence, and His fidelity to His promises. This hope is founded on the merits of Christ's Passion and death.

It is one of the theological virtues having God as its immediate object, one of those expressly mentioned by St. Paul when he says: "Now there remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. xiii. 13).

This virtue, together with faith and charity, is infused into our souls in baptism, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent. Baptism, it teaches, is the instrumental cause of justification in which grace and the virtues are infused; and furthermore, it teaches that in the act of justification, together with the remission of sins, a man receives at the same time all these virtues, infused simultaneously through Jesus Christ, in whom he is implanted, faith, hope, and charity (Con. Trent, Sess. vi. Ch. 7).

The learned and pious St. Francis de Sales well describes this virtue when he gives the distinction between to *hope* and to *aspire*. He says: "We hope for things which it depends on others to bestow, and which we cannot procure ourselves; we aspire to those which we can obtain by adopting certain measures. It is chiefly through the grace and mercy of God that we can attain to the enjoyment of His divine majesty, yet He requires that we should correspond with His grace by the feeble cooperation of our consent.

"Hope, by which we repose in God, is mingled with an ardent impulse, by which we bound toward God; it would be defective if

we merely hoped without aspiring to the object of our hope, or if we aspired to this divine object without grounding our pretensions on His infinite goodness, by which He promises Himself to us. Whence it is easy to judge that that which holds the first rank is not precisely a movement of aspiration, because the only objects considered are the goodness and the grace of God, which are necessary, not only for aspiring after God, but even for thinking worthily of our sovereign good" (Treatise on the Love of God, pp. 110, 111).

This virtue comes into the whole system of our supernatural life, together with faith and charity. God, in His eternal beatitude, is our final end. The beatific vision of God cannot be obtained in this life, and our intellect by the sole light of reason cannot know God as He is to be known, nor the means of doing His will; and, on that account, faith is necessary—that faith by which God reveals Himself to us, and teaches us how to serve Him in this life. In like manner our will inclines to God, either as He is the Good by which we can be made perfectly happy, and this motion of the will is by the virtue of hope, or our will inclines to God, as He is the greatest Good in Himself, and for this the virtue of charity is required. By the acts of these virtues we are moved toward God as the final object of our existence; and this cannot be done directly by the acts of any other virtues, and therefore it is that the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, are by their very nature the most essential and important, whose acts should be most frequently exercised by every Christian soul.

THE QUALITIES OF HOPE

There are two qualities of this virtue to which all others can be reduced: 1. That it be firm or immovable, and 2. That it be universal. With regard to the first of these St. Paul calls hope the anchor of salvation: "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us. Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil" (Heb. vi. 18, 19).

Hope is founded on the promises of God, and therefore it

should be certain and firm, inasmuch as God is faithful to His promises, and by reason of His omnipotence He can execute all that He has promised and all things according to His will. On the part of God our hope should be absolutely certain, but on our part it must always be accompanied by holy fear as to the ultimate result and as to the manner of our correspondence with and perseverance in grace. "The childlike fear of the Lord," says Bishop Ullathorne, "is the true beginning of hope as well as of wisdom; for in detaching us from trust in ourselves it sets us free to trust in God. It is neither servile, worldly, nor carnal fear, but the reverence of God in the fear of ourselves. . . . The power of the gift of the fear of the Lord is to conquer the fears of creatures, to absorb them and so banish them from the soul, and to restore us to our freedom and dignity because the gift of the fear of the Lord delivers us from every other fear."

The second quality of hope is that it be universal: that is to hope all things and at all times. We should hope for all things, all good things to be obtained from the merciful hands of God: 1. Eternal happiness to be certainly obtained if we persevere in grace, or if grace be lost by sin, hope is not lost unless the sin be one of despair, the sinner may still hope sincerely for repentance and the recovery of grace and restoration to the friendship of God. 2. We should hope for all the means necessary to obtain salvation —these God has promised. And, 3. We should hope and pray for all things necessary both for soul and body. Again we should hope always and at all times, no matter in what condition or state we may find ourselves. The more helpless and miserable we are, the greater should be our hope. In times of dangers and temptations especially you need the aid of this virtue, through which you may rest assured that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13).

Even the greatest sinners should never despair of the mercy of God, for as long as they live here on earth the means of salvation are available, and God offers them the grace of conversion if they turn to Him in prayer and sorrow of heart.

NECESSITY OF HOPE

Hope is necessary because grace requires its presence in the soul. Let me remind you, dear brethren, that love always desires the most intimate union with the person beloved, as may be illustrated by cases of individuals and of families. Grace makes a man the friend of God, and His child and heir, and faith teaches that it is possible for us to possess an ineffable union with God which results in eternal bliss, and therefore the desire of this union is infused into the soul. Now, a desire without the hope of obtaining its object would be the torment of the soul, and therefore God, who imparts His grace to us, bestows upon us at the same time the virtue of hope, as a companion to the virtues of faith and charity. Faith, which makes known to us our supernatural destiny, represents it to us not only as eminently desirable, but also as possible with the aids that God has promised. This leads us to elicit an act of hope. We find in the revelation made by faith the conditions on which our hope must be founded, namely, love—at least initial love of the supreme goodness—and confidence in the power of attaining its enjoyment. In the just the infused habits correspond to the acts which proceed from them, and as all are obliged sometimes to make acts of hope, we can from this also conclude the necessity of this virtue, and that the grace which justifies us must have united with it that holy hope which is the strength and consolation of our exile here on earth. We may, therefore, say with the Apostle: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, hath regenerated us into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that can not fade, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter i. 3, 4).

The necessity of this virtue may also be proved from several places of Holy Scripture. The Psalmist says: "In God is my salvation and my glory: he is the God of my help, and my hope is in God. Trust in him, all ye congregation of people" (Ps. lxi. 8, 9). God will reward abundantly those who hope in Him. "Because he hoped in me I will deliver" (Ibid. xc. 14). We have seen how often our Saviour attributes His miracles to the faith or confidence of those on whose behalf He performed them. To the

centurion He said: "Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee" (Matt. viii. 13). To the blind man of Jericho He said: "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole" (Mark x. 52). In these places *faith* is to be understood in the sense of hope and trust in the power of God as we understand it in to-day's Gospel. Finally hope is necessary to the full honor of God, because through it we acknowledge that all comes from God, that we expect all from His bounty, and that He can never fail in His words and promises.

THE EFFECTS OF HOPE

St. Francis de Sales, writing on the love which springs from hope, says: "When faith has drawn aside the veil of ignorance, which concealed the Almighty from our view, it is incredible with what ardor the soul longs to attain a knowledge of the sovereign good which she beholds far distant, and to burst the bonds of her natural life." She exclaims: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli. 1, 2.) Again he writes: "The promises of God produce a wonderful effect in our souls; they diminish and dispel our uneasiness by strengthening the cause from which it proceeds. This is an undeniable truth. The Almighty, by holding out to us a promise of future happiness, increases our previous desire of enjoying it; and yet, the anxiety attendant on this desire is almost destroyed by the promise. Calm and content are diffused into our hearts by the assurance which God gives them to new desires." This calm and rest of the soul may be appropriately likened to the calm which succeeded the tempest on the Sea of Galilee after our Saviour's command to the winds and the waves: "And there came a great calm." As St. Chrysostom has said: "As a lord commands a handmaid and as a Creator the works of His hands, so did our Saviour calm the sea and chain the waves," and so does He calm the troubles and anxieties of all faithful souls who put their trust in Him. In the words of St. Gregory we may give the following enumeration or explanation of the effects and results of this divine virtue: "The elect numbers his days as those of a hireling; he reaches forward

unto his prize, the more confident in hope, the more steadfastly he endures under the increase of toils. He watches the flowing away of this present time; he reckons up his days and his work; he fears that any movement of his lips should glide away without its appointed labor; he rejoices in adversity, he is restored by suffering, he is refreshed by sorrow, because he sees that he shall more largely be repaid by the rewards of the life to come, the more truly he renders himself up, for the love thereof, unto a daily death" (Benedict XIV., "On Heroic Virtue," English edition, vol. i. p. 95).

CONCLUSION

Dear brethren, I have dwelt upon this virtue to-day and endeavored to explain it for the purpose of directing your attention to the theological virtues, as they are the soul of the supernatural life, and on them primarily and directly depends the meritoriousness of all acts of virtue, and they contain the beginnings of eternal life and the participation in or conformation to divine life. Your special attention has been directed to the virtue of hope, that this virtue may not be forgotten or its acts neglected. We hear much from time to time of the other virtues—of faith and charity, and of the moral virtues, such as patience, humility, obedience, etc., but I would ask you to examine yourselves frequently upon the manner in which you exercise this virtue and its acts. I fear it is a very common failing amongst Christians to distrust the providence of God and to neglect having recourse to that providence as it behooves them. When things prosper with people they attribute the success to themselves and to their own efforts; when things are adverse and when want and suffering fall to their lot, then they lose all hope and confidence, at the time when the words of our Blessed Redeemer would remind them of their duty: "Why are you fearful, O yet of little faith?" On certain occasions some Christians lose heart and courage and give way to their miseries and sink under their afflictions through forgetfulness of this virtue that God has infused into their souls. Let it then influence our lives, and let it influence our prayers, and especially that one daily prayer taught us by our Saviour Himself —the Lord's Prayer. By which we beg of Him our daily bread as

from a Father; by which also we beg that His kingdom may come; for the pardon of our sins; for strength to resist temptations; for deliverance from all evil. God wishes us to ask for all these things, and He will infallibly grant our petitions if our prayers be with proper hope and confidence. Hope then without hesitation or doubt. Hope in whatever state you may be in; hope in life and in death; rest your hope on Jesus Christ our Saviour and be assured you will never be confounded.

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SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

SUBJECT

THE VICE OF SLOTH

TEXT

Who departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers serving night and day.—Luke ii. 37.

Analysis

Introduction. The prophetess Anna, mentioned by St. Luke in to-day's Gospel, was one of the many holy women living in Jerusalem at the time of our Lord's birth and presentation in the Temple. This holy Anna was singular for her spiritual industry and zeal, laboring for God and for the beauty of His House, not

only during the day, but throughout the night. What an example she is for us, and for all Christians! We are satisfied with so little, so easily grow weary in the service of God and our dearest interests! Some Christians, indeed, know they are doing wrong, since they are actually giving their lives and time to evil pursuits; but there are also others so immersed in worldly cares that they take the absence of positive grievous wrong to be sufficient industry and effort to gain the crown of life, forgetting the words of the Holy Ghost, "there is a way that seemeth to man right; and the ends thereof lead to death" (Prov. xvi. 25).

I. The meaning of sloth. 1. Laziness is an inordinate love of ease, which leads one to neglect either his temporal or spiritual duties. It is a sin in either case, and in the former it is forbidden by implication, in the third Commandment—"six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." *Sloth,* which is a capital sin, is a distress of soul at the thought of what one must do to obtain or preserve the divine friendship. 2. The difference between *sloth* and *tepidity:* Tepidity or lukewarmness is a distaste for piety, which causes a person to perform his religious duties in a careless and lazy manner; while sloth is such a disgust for religious practices that by it one is led to disregard and despise God's friendship. Neither of these sins should be confounded with that *dryness* and aridity which many good people often experience in the performance of their religious duties, but which never interferes with their faithfulness. Sloth and tepidity are voluntary, whereas dryness is involuntary. 3. Sloth, of itself, is a grievous sin for two reasons: (a) because it makes a man neglect the one thing necessary, namely, his salvation, and is therefore opposed to the charity he owes himself; (b) because it is directly opposed to the Commandment that we love God with our whole heart, mind and strength, and is thus opposed to the charity we owe to God. 4. Sloth therefore is a mortal sin when it is fully voluntary and makes a person regret or neglect serious obligations. It is only venial when it is not fully voluntary. 5. Tepidity is very dangerous, for our Lord says: "Because thou art luke-

warm, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth" (Apoc. iii. 16).

II. The evil effects of sloth. 1. It takes away all relish for spiritual things. This is why many have such an aversion for religious practices that they either neglect them, or hurry through them as quickly as possible. 2. Procrastination in religious duties and inconstancy in keeping good resolutions are other results of sloth. 3. Again, sloth causes one to waste in mere idleness one's time, opportunities and talents. 4. It brings further a certain despair of salvation, and dread at the thought of spiritual effort and labor, and a love of ease and pleasure. 5. From sloth arises an inordinate and insatiable curiosity about the doings and sayings of others, and the news of the day: "working not at all, but curiously meddling" (2 Thess. iii. 11). 6. Finally, since the slothful man has no pleasure in spiritual things, he often turns to dangerous diversions, such as bad company, gambling, and the like.

III. Remedies against sloth. To overcome sloth we must first try to rid ourselves of tepidity and increase our love of God: "I have run the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart" (Ps. cxviii. 32). 2. Another means of combating sloth is to avoid too much ease and self-indulgence and to practice mortifications. 3. We must try to avoid deliberate venial sins, as much as possible. 4. A great help against sloth is a regular rule of life, with fixed times for attending to religious duties. 5. We must frequently reflect on the greatness of the Master whom we are called to serve, and the immensity of the reward which is promised us. Let us bear also in mind that our salvation is the one important affair of life, and that "the night cometh when no man can work" (John ix. 4).

EXHORTATION. 1. Let us reflect on the difference between our interest in temporal and in eternal things. What proportion of our time and labor is spent in the all-important business of our salvation? 2. Are we among those who boast of the evil we avoid, blind to the good we neglect? or among those who think they have done enough so long as they are not so bad as some

others? 3. Let us learn from the example of holy Anna that we must enrich our lives with positive good works and actions.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermons

Necessity of Good Works

BY THE VERY REV. F. C. DOYLE, O.S.B.

INTRODUCTION

Every evening before retiring to rest it is a praiseworthy custom among good Catholics to examine their consciences, that they may discover, and having discovered, that they may repent of any evil they may have committed. Having done this, I would suggest that they should next examine themselves to see what good they have performed during the fleeting hours of the day that has gone forever. For we are obliged by the law of God not only to avoid evil but to do good. If we do not good, we are like the evil tree that did not produce good fruit; we are simply cumbering the ground; and unless we bestir ourselves, we shall be cut down and cast into the fire.

MEANING OF GOOD WORKS

Before, however, attempting to prove to you the necessity of good works we must have a clear notion of what a good work is. By a good work, that is to say, one meriting a supernatural reward, we mean a work performed by a man who is in the state of grace; who performs it in consequence of a movement of actual grace; with a view to please God; freely, and not by compulsion or constraint. From these words it is evident that the state of grace is necessary to make a work, good in itself, worthy of an eternal reward. For if performed by those who are not in that state, the work would be worthless for salvation, inasmuch as the doers of that work would, in the case supposed, be like athletes running outside the course, not contending lawfully, and, conse-

quently, not deserving the prize. Performed, however, by anyone who is in the state of grace, it merits a supernatural reward, because God has condescended to promise to those who thus accomplish these works His eternal recompense. Hence, because St. Paul fought the good fight, completed his course, and kept the faith, that is to say, fulfilled this condition of being in the state of grace while performing these good works, the Lord, the just Judge, bestowed on him the everlasting crown prepared as the reward for these brilliant virtues.

Again, to merit this reward, these good works must be performed by a movement of actual grace with a view to God. For we may, apart from the grace of God, act through human motives, through humor, or temperament, or habit. Works of this kind have no merit for heaven—such, for example, as almsgiving through mere natural compassion for the miseries of others; prayers recited through mere habit or routine, good works actuated by vanity or hypocrisy, or human respect. Furthermore, our acts must be free, exempt from constraint, or from all necessity. The reason is that in such acts there is no freedom of will, and consequently there can be no merit. With these preliminary notions in our minds, giving us a clear idea of what a good work is, we may now proceed to prove that the production or performance of good works is necessary for us in whatever stage of the spiritual life we may chance to be.

That spiritual life by which men tend toward God, has, by ascetical writers, been mapped out into three regions. There is the region of those who, having risen from their sins, had sorrow for them, confessed them, and determined not again to repeat them, begin to lead a holy life. These persons having acquired good habits, next pass into that region traversed by those who are making progress in virtue. Lastly, there is that in which by long continuance in leading a godly life, men become as perfect as it is possible for them to become in this land of exile, this vale of tears.

NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS FOR BEGINNERS

In each of these regions or stages of the spiritual life it is necessary that those who are treading them on their way to God

should produce good works. To begin with those who have entered upon the first or lowest stage of this life. There are men whose intelligence, enlightened by grace, has seen the turpitude of sin; whose hearts have been struck with fear at the contemplation of the punishments which it deserves, and who have, consequently, determined to turn away from it in order to serve the living God, their beginning and their end. They grieve over their past offenses; they humbly confess them; they resolve with the help of God's grace never to repeat them. This last mentioned determination is that which moves them to produce good works. It is, consequently, in this respect the most necessary of the three acts constituting repentance and setting them on the first stage of the spiritual life, though it would not be of any avail without sorrow, and, when confession is possible, without that act also. Therefore, we term it the most necessary only with respect to the bringing forth of good works. Why must they of necessity produce these good works in order to carry out the essential condition or resolve not to repeat these sins? Because, in order not to do so, they must perforce pray that grace may be given them for this purpose; they must watch over themselves to be ready for the attacks of the evil one and for the revolt of their passions. When the assault is delivered, as it will most certainly be frequently delivered, they must withstand it by repulsing the evil suggestions and by denying the passionate craving which those suggestions stir up within them. What else are these acts than good works? What are they but the careful tending of the tree to which the soul is likened by our Lord, the pruning of it, the lopping off of all superfluous branches and twigs, the feeding of which drains the tree of its life? In other words, it is the process by which the soul that has been sick and sorely stricken by the malady of sin heals itself of its ills, repressing its anger by meekness, its avarice by almsdeeds, its lust by angelic chastity. Thus does the soul, in this the first stage of the spiritual life, bring forth good works, the production of which is for it a necessity, otherwise it would fall back, it would fail to do anything to remedy the past, to heal itself of its mortal malady.

NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS FOR PROFICIENTS

In process of time—longer for some, briefer for others—these efforts to lead a spiritual life enable the soul to pass into a higher stage; it ceases to be a mere beginner; it becomes a proficient; it makes progress; it acquires habits of virtue. In this stage also, souls, though cleansed of their sins and endowed with virtues, may not desist from their efforts, nor must they attempt to stand still. Why is this? Because the way to God, to eternal life, is beset by the ever watchful, malignant enemies of man. They slumber not nor sleep in their warfare against him. They literally swarm upon that steep and difficult way and endeavor to trip up and to murder those who are traveling along it, throwing into their efforts even a greater malignity than they employed against them in the initial stage of conversion. Consequently, there is need not only of the same watchfulness and prayer and effort, but of the aid of a more powerful arm to beat them off and to insure victory. Now, by what means may this protection be deserved and secured? Only by an exact observance of all the commandments of God. To those who being already just shall add this other condition, God will be ever present, and, as a strong man armed, will protect His servants from the insidious and persistent attacks of their enemies. Thus, the production of good works is a necessity for those who are tending toward God on this higher way of the spiritual life.

GOOD WORKS NECESSARY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE REACHED RELATIVE PERFECTION

The third or last stage of this onward march toward God is that in which from being a proficient—one acquiring and preserving the good habits produced in the soul by the aid of God's grace—the Christian at last attains to that perfection which is possible in this life. Though perfect with this relative perfection, relative to his graces and to his state of life, he must not relax his efforts, but must still of necessity continue to bring forth good works. Why so? That he may be able to persevere. It is not enough to begin and then to go on for some years in this laudable work; that work must last; it must cease only with his spark of life. Only

perseverance till the end crowns that work. To whom does God grant this grace? Ordinarily speaking, it is only to those who by patience in the performance of good works seek glory, honor, incorruption, eternal life. Not to those who weary of this life struggle; who faint under the heat and the labor of the day; who grow disgusted with the sameness of the contest, and, throwing it up, once again pass over to the ranks of God's enemies, thus playing fast and loose with the great Leader, breaking their oath of fealty to Him, then renewing it, and once again deserting His standard. All this patience, this continuance in the practice, in the production of good works, means violence to self, violence to vices and passions, labor, pain, self-denial, a veritable crucifixion. These are the good works that must be performed in this last stage. Their performance is a necessity. The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and only those who are willing to use this violence against themselves shall bear it away. It is given to those who shall produce good works, and who, by reason of the continual production of them, are enabled by God, as a reward of their fidelity, to persevere even unto the end.

THE REWARDS OF GOOD WORKS

Having proved to you the necessity for the production of good works in each and in all the stages of the spiritual life, let me now encourage you to undertake and to persevere in this labor by briefly setting before you the rewards granted by God to those who shall not shrink from it.

I. OUR CALLING AND ELECTION IS MADE SURE

The first of these is that it renders our salvation sure. God has called each of us to the possession of Himself in life eternal. He has chosen us out of so many other possible creatures for this sublime end. To enable us to reach that end, He has paid the ransom due to the eternal Father for man's primal transgression. For the application to ourselves of that ransom, He has instituted the glorious Church, and in it has stored those marvelous sacraments that convey to our souls the divine aid by which weak human nature is enabled to make that ransom its own. In his

second epistle, St. Peter tells us how the salvation thus so generously offered may be made certain. It is by the production of those good works which are for us a necessity. "Strive," he says, "by means of good works to make your calling and election secure" for by acting thus you will never sin. This is undoubtedly a great benefit.

2. TREASURES OF MERIT

Another benefit is that good works form for us a store of merits each of which is worthy of an eternal reward. Not one of these good works is forgotten by God. Every prayer that we offer, every act of self-denial that we perform, every deed of charity done for even the meanest of God's rational creatures is most graciously accepted by Him, and for each a special recompense is laid up for us in the treasury of God. What an encouragement is this for us during the course of our weary pilgrimage! Why should we labor and give ourselves endless trouble to amass a little of the world's gold that we and others depending upon us may be sure of daily bread, may procure raiment to cover us, and have a roof to shelter us? The rust eats into our coffers; the moth destroys our garments; thieves break into our houses and carry off that which we have been at so great pains to acquire. Therefore, the truly wise, by means of good works, lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, where these mishaps can never befall them.

3. LIFE ETERNAL

Lastly, good works procure for us the reward of life eternal. Does not the great Judge insinuate as much in the sentence He tells us shall be pronounced upon the just? Does He not first call them to their reward, and having done so say to them: "I was hungry and thirsty, and ye gave me to eat and to drink; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me; naked and cold, and ye clothed me"—doing all this by the practice of your good works? Therefore, is it not to them that we owe eternal life? Does not St. Paul also attribute that ineffable reward to the same cause when he tells us that there was laid up for him a crown of justice for having fought the good fight against evil, for having run the

course appointed for him by Christ, and for having kept the faith, both that proposed for his acceptance and belief and that which he had plighted to God? Therefore, the security of our salvation, an inexhaustible treasure of merits, and eternal glory are the rewards laid up for those who, during life's brief day, have been diligent in the production of good works.

CONCLUSION

My brethren, frequently repeat to yourselves that sentence of the great Master: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire." Before you retire to rest, after having first searched your spirit to discover its daily faults and to cleanse it of them by sincere sorrow, fail not to ask yourselves: "What good work have I this day done for God?" This question will bring before you the necessity for producing good works, for doing good as well as for avoiding evil. That necessity presses upon you in each of the stages of your spiritual life—as beginners, as proficients, and as even perfect in the ways of God. If admitting that necessity, you earnestly endeavor to accomplish that which it incessantly urges you to accomplish, your reward will be the security of salvation, a rich store of merits, and the prize of eternal life. Therefore, while you have time, do good; be zealous in the production of good works. The time for so doing is short. Work while you have the light; the night is rapidly advancing during which you can do no work.

Lukewarmness

BY THE CURÉ OF ARS

But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot; I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.—Apocalypse iii. 16.

INTRODUCTION

Can we, my dear friends, listen without fear to this expression from the mouth of God Himself against a bishop who seemed to be fulfilling all the duties of a worthy servant of the Church? This man led a well regulated life, and his fortune was not spent

in the ways of the unjust. Far from approving vice, he opposed it vigorously. He gave no bad example, and his life seemed really worthy of being imitated by others. And yet, notwithstanding all this, we learn that the Lord let St. John say to him, that if he should continue in his way of living, He would cast him out, *i.e.*, punish him, and not admit him to salvation. Yes, my friends, this example must fill us with all the more horror because there are so many who tread in the same path, live in the same manner, and consider their salvation perfectly assured. Oh, how really small is the number of those who, in the eyes of the world, are positively lost or positively saved! Which path do we follow? Are we on the right path? We should tremble at the thought that we do not know. Let us try, then, to discover whether we are so unfortunate as to belong to the lukewarm.

HOW YOU CAN TELL WHETHER YOU BELONG TO THE LUKEWARM

If, my dear friends, I speak to you to-day of the terrible condition of a lukewarm soul, I do not mean those who never go to Confession and Communion. Such people are not lukewarm. They are cold, and their souls are lost, even if they still come to church and perform some good works. Let us leave them to their perdition, because they wish for no better. But you may ask, will not all those who receive the Sacrament at least at Easter time, be saved? Surely, my friends, not all of those will be saved, because if all those who make frequent use of the Sacraments would be saved, the number of the elect would not be as small as in reality it is. But let us acknowledge at the same time that all those who will have the great happiness of going to heaven, will be chosen from those who make frequent use of the Sacraments, and not from those who do not go to Communion and Confession at least at Easter-time. You will think that, if all those who do not perform their Easter duty will be damned, the number of the condemned will be very great. No doubt it is very great. Whatever may be said to the contrary, there is no doubt that all those who lead a sinful life must share that fate. Is not your heart troubled at this thought?

Again, my dear friends, I do not classify as lukewarm those who are striving to belong to the world without ceasing to belong

to God. One moment you will see them throw themselves down upon their knees before God, and the next you will see them perform the same act before the idols of this world. The poor blind man! He stretches forth one hand to the Almighty and the other to the world, calling to both for help, and promising his heart to both. He loves God—at least he would like to love Him—but at the same time he wants to please the world. But, soon tiring of his efforts to give himself to both, he finally gives himself entirely to the world.

Now, let me tell you, my friends of the condition of a lukewarm soul. A lukewarm soul is not yet quite dead in the eyes of the Lord, because faith, hope, and charity, which are its spiritual life are not entirely extinguished in it. But it is a faith without zeal, hope without firmness, love without ardor. Let me describe to you a zealous Christian, *i.e.*, a Christian who really and ardently longs to save his soul, and then a person who leads a lukewarm life in the service of God. Then we will compare the two, and you will see to which class you belong. A good Christian is not satisfied to simply believe in the truths of our holy religion. He loves them, he ponders over them, he tries in every possible way to acquire a knowledge of them; he loves to hear the word of God, and the more he hears it, the more he longs for it. He believes not only that God sees him in all his actions, and judges them all at the hour of death, but he trembles at the thought that he will have to render an account of his whole life to God. He not only thinks of this, and trembles over it, but he strives earnestly to improve himself daily. He never ceases in his endeavors to find new ways in which to do penance.

How different from this is the Christian who lives a lukewarm life! He still believes in all the truths which the Church believes and teaches, but his faith is so weak that his heart has not part in it at all. He does not doubt that the good Lord sees him, and that he is ever in His holy presence. But while believing this, he does not amend, nor sin the less. He falls into sin as easily as if he did not believe in anything. He is fully convinced that so long as he remains in this condition, he is an enemy of God, and yet he makes no effort to extricate himself from it. He knows that Jesus Christ has given to the Sacrament of Penance the power to remit our

sins, and help us in the acquisition of virtue. He knows that this Sacrament gives us graces in accordance with the state of mind in which we receive it. But all this has no effect. He remains throughout his life just as indifferent, just as lukewarm. His Confessions and Communions are few and far between. He generally waits for a great feast-day, or a jubilee, or a mission, or he goes because others do so, and not because his poor soul needs it. He not only does nothing to merit this happiness, but he does not even envy those who partake of it frequently. If you talk to him of heavenly affairs, he is uninterested. Nothing touches him. He hears the word of God, but it wearies him. He listens to it from habit. Long prayers he dislikes. His mind is full of what he has done, or is going to do. His poor soul is fighting the battle of death. It is still living, but it is unable to do anything for heaven.

The hope of a good Christian is firm; his trust in God is unshaken. He never loses sight of the next life. The remembrance of the sufferings of Jesus Christ is ever present to his mind, is always in his heart. At times he directs his thoughts to hell, so as to picture to himself how great is the punishment for sin, and how boundless the misery of those who commit it. At times he raises his thoughts to heaven, to arouse his love of God, and that he may be sensible of the happiness of those who prefer God above all things. He represents to himself how great the reward is of those who forsake all things to do the holy will of God. Then he longs for God alone, and desires Him only. The goods of this world are as nothing to him. The pleasures of this world fill him with aversion. He does not fear death in the least, because he well knows that it will merely deliver him from the miseries of this life, and unite him with God forever.

But a lukewarm soul is very far from thinking thus. The next life is no serious consideration for him. If he does think of heaven, it is without a real desire to enter there. He knows that sin closes the doors of heaven against him. At the same time he does not strive to amend, at least, not in an earnest manner. Consequently, he finds himself always in the same condition. The evil spirit deceives him by inducing him to make numerous good resolutions to do better, to be more cautious in his words, more patient in his trials, kinder to his neighbor. But all this does not

make the slightest change in his way of living. For twenty or more years he has made these good resolutions without, however, losing any of his bad habits. And if he could pass his life without crosses and trials, he would never want to leave this world. If you hear him say that this life is very long and miserable, it is only when everything does not go as he wishes. When God sends him crosses or want, to compel him, as it were, to detach himself from this life, behold! he is filled with bitterness, gives way to complaints and murmuring, and very often to a sort of despair. He appears not to understand that it is God who sends him these trials for his own good, to detach him from this life and to draw him to Himself. What has he done to deserve this, he thinks to himself, as there are so many others more culpable than he, who are not subjected to such visitations?

A good Christian, my friends, is seldom occupied with the vain things of earth. If you speak to him about them, he is as indifferent as the people of the world when you speak to them of the things of eternity. Finally, he lets his happiness consist in crosses, tribulations, prayer, fasting, and the thought of God. Now, the lukewarm Christian loses his trust in God, though, perhaps, not entirely; but he does not distrust *himself* sufficiently. Although he very often is exposed to the occasion of sin, he still believes that he will not fall. If he does fall, he ascribes it to his neighbor, and assures himself that another time he will be more firm.

He who really loves God, and is anxious to save his soul, will employ every possible precaution to avoid the occasions of sin. He will not only avoid the grievous faults, but he will also be very careful to avoid the very least of them. He considers everything that can displease God as a great evil, or rather, everything that displeases God, displeases him, too. He considers that he is standing at the foot of a ladder which he must ascend. He perceives that to reach the topmost rung he has no time to lose, so that every day he advances from virtue to virtue, until the day of eternity. He is an eagle which cleaves the air, or rather as the lightning which, from the moment that it appears until it vanishes, loses none of its velocity. Yes, dear friends, this is what a soul does who works for God, and who ardently desires to behold Him.

This sort of love for God is not to be found in the lukewarm soul. You do not perceive that ardent desire, and the burning flame which overcome all obstacles to salvation. If you want to picture to yourselves, my dear brethren, the condition of a lukewarm soul, I can only tell you that it resembles a turtle, or a snail. They move about in such a slow way that you can hardly tell whether they have changed their position or not. The love which lukewarm Christians feel for God in their hearts, is like a tiny flame which is buried under a heap of ashes. This love is so surrounded with earthly thoughts and desires that if it is not choked, it is prevented from progressing, and is gradually extinguished. The lukewarm soul goes so far that he is indifferent about his ruin.

A Christian who leads a lukewarm life still fulfils his duties, at least, as far as appearances are concerned. He may say his prayers every morning upon his knees, he may go to the sacraments once a year and even more frequently, only in all this he shows so much reluctance, so much aversion, so much indifference, so little preparation, so little change of life, that you can see plainly that he does his duty from habit and negligently, because he is compelled to do it. His Confessions and Communions may not be sacrileges, but they are Confessions and Communions without result. Instead of making him more perfect and more acceptable to God, they render him still more culpable. A lukewarm person thinks very little about the state of his soul, and he seldom reflects upon the past. If he does think of his soul, he believes he ought to be perfectly satisfied because he has confessed his sins. He thinks of the needs of his soul, but in a feeble way only. He appears in God's presence without knowing what he is going to ask for.

THE MEANS BY WHICH WE MAY AVOID LUKEWARMNESS

Now, my dear friends, examine yourselves, and find out upon which side you stand: On the side of the sinner who has given up everything; who thinks no more about the salvation of his soul; who plunges into sin without any remorse of conscience? On the side of those just souls who behold God alone, and seek after Him? Or do you belong to those poor souls, to those lukewarm,

indifferent Christians, that I have just described to you? On which path are you walking? Who can say that he is not a sinner, nor lukewarm, but one of the elect! Alas, my friends, there are many who, in the eyes of the world, appear to be good Christians, but in the sight of God, who knows our intentions, are but lukewarm.

But you will say to me, what means shall we employ that we may get out of this miserable state? Let me first tell you that those who live in lukewarmness are, in a certain sense, in greater danger than those who live in mortal sin. A sinner laments his condition when his conscience awakens. He even longs to leave his sinful life, and he will leave it some day. But a soul which lives in lukewarmness never thinks of quitting that state, because he even thinks that he stands well with God. What shall we conclude from all this? This, dear brethren, that the lukewarm soul is in the sight of God more offensive, so that He will spit it out, that is, will leave it to perdition. O how many souls are ruined by this state!

If you desire to shake off this lukewarmness, dear brethren, you should betake yourselves from time to time to the portals of the abyss, whence you can hear the shrieks and howls of the lost, then you would have an idea of the tortures which they have to undergo, because, during their life they neglected the affair of their salvation. Raise up your thoughts to heaven, and behold the glory of the Saints, which is theirs because, while they were upon earth they fought and did violence to themselves. See with what zeal and earnestness those religious shut themselves up in the cloister. See how willingly they forgave, and did good to those that persecuted them, or spoke badly of them. Look at their humility! How they despised themselves, and how much they dreaded the praise and good opinion of the world. See how carefully they avoided the least occasion of sin and what copious tears they shed over their past sins. See how pure their intention was in all their good works. They thought only of God, and sought to please Him only. Let us conclude, dear brethren, by saying that there is no state so much to be feared for a person as that of lukewarmness, because a great sinner is more easily converted than a lukewarm soul. Let us pray to God with our whole

hearts, if we find ourselves in this state, that He may grant us the grace to leave it, and to take that path which all the Saints have taken, that we may attain to the bliss which they enjoy. This is what I wish you all. Amen.

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FEAST OF CIRCUMCISION

SUBJECT

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN

TEXT

His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.—Luke ii. 21.

Analysis

Introduction. The sublime dignity of the name of our Saviour is indicated in the words of to-day's Gospel which show that it was conceived in heaven by God, and announced on earth by an angel. Such an origin and such announcement were indeed fitting the name of Him who was in reality not only man, but also

God Himself. As we owe to the Person of God all respect, and all homage, so do we owe His name the highest reverence of which we are capable. Unfortunately, however, in these days the name of God is only too often dishonored; and it is needful, therefore, at this time that we should meditate on the second Commandment, and recall our duties towards God's holy name.

I. What the second Commandment requires. 1. This precept demands that due reverence be given to all the names by which God is designated. 2. We honor God's name in the following ways: (a) by publicly acknowledging Him as our Lord and Master; (b) by respectfully hearing and meditating on His word; (c) by praising and thanking Him both in adversity and prosperity; (d) by imploring His assistance; (e) by the taking of lawful oaths and vows. 3. An oath is the calling on God to witness the truth of what one says or promises. To be lawful an oath must have the following qualities: (a) the one swearing must affirm what he believes to be true, or must promise what he intends to fulfill; (b) it must be taken with judgment, *i.e.*, it must be made prudently and in a serious manner; (c) it must be just, *i.e.*, one must never affirm or promise under oath what is unlawful, *e.g.*, to steal; an unjust oath not only does not oblige, but it would be a sin to keep it. 4. That it is lawful to take oaths under proper conditions is clear both from the teaching of Scripture, and from the fact that an oath is a profession of faith in God and promotes justice and peace among men. Our Lord reproved the practice of the Jews of taking oaths on trivial occasions and without necessity, but He did not forbid taking necessary oaths. 5. The second Commandment requires that we keep our lawful oaths and vows. 6. A vow is a deliberate promise made to God regarding something which is good, within our power, and better than its opposite, and to the keeping of which we bind ourselves under pain of sin.

II. What the second Commandment forbids. 1. The irreverent use of the name of God or of any holy thing, especially in a cursing and blasphemous manner, *i.e.*, when one wishes evil to or

speaks contemptuously of God or sacred things. 2. Perjury or the taking of a false oath. 3. This precept is also violated by swearing to do that which is seriously wrong, by swearing without sufficient reason or by false gods, by disrespectfully using the words of Scriptures, or by failing to keep our lawful vows. 4. Cursing, *i.e.*, the calling down of evil on any of God's creatures; and profanity, *i.e.*, speaking lightly of holy things.

Conclusion. 1. The second Commandment is the only one which is accompanied by a threat, and this shows us how hateful to God are the sins which violate it. The perjurer and blasphemer have often been visibly punished in this world. 2. Those who have habituated themselves to the use of cursing and blasphemous language should not hold themselves free from grievous sin, unless they are manfully striving to overcome those habits. A proof that one can refrain from profanity, cursing, blasphemy, and the like, is that he never uses such language in the presence of ladies, employers, or any decent company. 3. Profanity and blasphemy are the language of hell, as praise and glorification of God's name are the language of heaven. Let us practice now the speech we hope to use for eternity. 4. In order to make reparation for blasphemy let us always say the Divine Praises after Benediction or Mass with great devotion.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Second Commandment

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.[1]

Why this commandment is distinct from the first

The second Commandment is necessarily comprised in the first, which commands us to worship God in piety and holiness. For he who requires that honor be paid him, also requires that he be spoken of with reverence and must forbid the contrary, according to these words of the Lord in Malachy: "The son honoreth the father, and the servant his master; if then I be a father, where is

[1] Exod. xx. 7.

my honor?"[2] However, on account of the importance of the obligation which it imposes, God wished to make the law, which commands His name to be honored, a distinct Commandment, and this He did in the clearest and simplest terms.

NECESSITY OF CAREFUL EXPLANATION OF THIS COMMANDMENT

This observation should convince the pastor that on this point it is not enough to speak in general terms; that the importance of the subject is such as to require it to be dwelt upon at considerable length, and to be explained to the faithful in all its bearings with distinctness, clearness, and accuracy.[3]

This diligence on the part of the pastor cannot be deemed superfluous, since there are not wanting those who are so blinded by the darkness of error as not to dread to blaspheme His name, whom the angels glorify. Men are not deterred by the Commandment of God from shamefully and daringly outraging His divine majesty every day, or rather every hour and moment of the day. Who is ignorant that every assertion is accompanied with an oath? that every conversation teems with curses and imprecations? To such lengths has this impiety been carried, that there is scarcely anyone who buys, or sells, or transacts ordinary business of any sort, without having recourse to swearing, and who, even in matters the most unimportant and trivial, does not profane the most holy name of God thousands of times. It therefore becomes more imperative on the pastor, not to neglect, carefully and frequently to admonish the faithful how grievous and detestable is this crime.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT ENJOINS THAT GOD'S NAME BE HONORED

But in the exposition of this Commandment the pastor will show that besides a negative, it also contains a positive precept commanding the performance of a duty, and will give to each a separate exposition.

[2] Malach. i. 6.

[3] On the second commandment see St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 122. art. 3; Ia. IIae., q. 100, art. 5.

In the first place, to facilitate the explanation of these matters it is necessary to know what the precept commands and what it prohibits. It commands us to honor the name of God, and when solemnly appealing to Him by an oath, to do so with due reverence. It prohibits us to contemn the divine name, to take it in vain, or swear by it falsely, unnecessarily, or rashly. When therefore we are commanded to honor the name of God, the command, as the pastor will show, is not directed to the letters or syllables of which that name is composed, or in any respect to the mere name; but to the meaning of a word used to express the Omnipotent and Eternal Majesty of the Godhead, Trinity in Unity. Hence we at once perceive the superstition of those among the Jews who, whilst they hesitated not to write, dared not to pronounce the name of God, as if the divine power consisted in the four letters of the name and not in the signification of the name.

Although in this Commandment the word "name" is expressed in the singular number, "Thou shalt not take the name of God," this is not to be understood to refer to any one name, but to every name by which God is generally designated. For He is called by many names, such as "the Lord," "the Almighty," "the Lord of Hosts," "the King of Kings," "the Strong," and by others of similar nature which we meet in Scripture, and which are all entitled to the same veneration.

THE VARIOUS WAYS OF HONORING GOD'S NAME

The pastor will also teach how the name of God is to be honored. Christians, whose tongues should every day celebrate the divine praises, are not to be ignorant of a matter so important, indeed so necessary to salvation. The name of God may be honored in a variety of ways; but all may be reduced to the following heads.

In the first place, God's name is honored when we openly and confidently confess Him to be our Lord and our God; and when we acknowledge and also proclaim Christ to be the author of our salvation.

It is also honored when we pay a religious attention to His word, which announces to us His sovereign will; make it the subject of our daily meditation; and strive by reading or hearing

it, according to our respective capacities and conditions of life, to become acquainted with it.

Again, we honor and venerate the name of God, when from a sense of religious duty we celebrate His praises, and under all circumstances, whether prosperous or adverse, return Him unbounded thanks. Thus spoke the prophet: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee." [4] Among the Psalms of David there are many, in which, animated with singular piety towards God, the Psalmist chants in sweetest strains the divine praises. We have also the admirable example of Job, who, when visited with the heaviest and most appalling calamities, never ceased, with lofty and unconquered soul, to give praise to God. When, therefore, we labor under affliction of mind or body, when oppressed by misery and misfortune, let us instantly direct all our thoughts, and all the powers of our souls, to the praises of God, saying with Job: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." [5]

The name of God is not less honored when we confidently invoke His assistance, either to relieve us from our afflictions, or to give us constancy and strength to endure them with fortitude. This is in accordance with His own wishes: "Call upon me," He says "in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." [6] We have illustrious examples of such supplications in many passages of Scripture, and especially in the sixteenth, forty-third, and one hundred and eighteenth Psalms.

Finally, we honor the name of God when we solemnly call upon Him to witness the truth of what we assert. This mode of honoring God's name differs much from those already enumerated. Those means are in their own nature so good, so desirable, that our days and nights could not be more happily or more holily spent than in such practices of piety. "I will bless the Lord at all times," says David, "his praise shall be always in my mouth." [7] Oaths, on the other hand, although in themselves lawful, should not be used often.

[4] Ps. cii. 1.
[5] Job. i. 21.
[6] Ps. xlix. 15.
[7] Ps. xxxiii. 2.

OATHS SHOULD SELDOM BE TAKEN

The reason of this difference is that oaths have been instituted only as remedies to human frailty, and a necessary means of establishing the truth of what we assert. As it is inexpedient to have recourse to medicine, unless when it becomes necessary, and as its frequent use is most pernicious; so, with regard to oaths, we should never recur to them, unless when there is a weighty and just cause, and frequent recurrence to them, far from being advantageous, is on the contrary highly prejudicial. Hence the excellent observation of St. Chrysostom: "Oaths were introduced among men, not at the beginning of the world, but long after; when vice had spread far and wide over the earth; when all things were disturbed and universal confusion reigned throughout; when, to complete human depravity, almost all mankind debased the dignity of their nature by prostrating themselves in degrading servitude to idols. Then only was it that the custom of oaths was introduced. For the perfidy and wickedness of men was so great that it was with difficulty that man could be induced to credit the assertion of his fellow-man, and it was necessary to call God to witness the truth of each one's statements." [8]

MEANING OF AN OATH

Since in explaining this part of the Commandment our chief object is to teach the faithful the conditions necessary to render an oath reverential and holy, it is first to be observed, that to swear, whatever the form of words may be, is nothing else than to call God to witness; thus to say, "God is my witness," and "by God," mean one and the same thing.

To swear by creatures, such as the holy Gospels, the cross, the names or relics of the saints, and so on, in order to prove our statements, is another way of taking an oath. Of themselves, it is true, such objects give no weight or authority to an oath; it derives its obligation from God, whose divine majesty shines forth in them. Hence to swear by the Gospel is to swear by God Himself, whose word is contained and revealed in the Gospel. This holds equally true with regard to those who swear by the saints,

[8] Ad. pop. Antioch. hom. 26.

who are the temples of God, who believed the truth of His Gospel, were faithful to its dictates, and diffused its doctrines among the remotest nations of the earth.

This is also true of oaths uttered by way of execration, such as that of St. Paul: "I call God to witness upon my soul." [9] By this form of oath we subject ourselves to God as the avenger of falsehood. We do not, however, deny that some of these forms may be used without constituting an oath; but even in such cases it will be found useful to observe what has been said with regard to an oath, and to regulate such forms by the same rule and standard.

OATHS ARE AFFIRMATORY AND PROMISSORY

Oaths are of two kinds. The first is an affirmatory oath and is taken when we religiously affirm anything, past or present; such was the affirmation of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians: "Behold, before God, I lie not." [10] The second kind of oath, to which comminations may be reduced, is called promissory. It looks to the future, and is taken when we promise and affirm for certain that such or such a thing will be done. Such was the oath of David, who swore to Bethsabee his wife, by the Lord his God, that Solomon, his son, should be heir to his kingdom and successor to his throne.[11]

CONDITIONS OF A LAWFUL OATH

Although to constitute an oath it is sufficient to call God to witness, yet to constitute a holy and just oath many other conditions are required; and these it is the duty of the pastor carefully to explain. The other conditions, as St. Jerome observes,[12] are briefly enumerated in these words of the prophet Jeremias: "Thou shalt swear: as the Lord liveth, in truth and in judgment, and in justice." [13] These words briefly sum up all the conditions, which constitute the perfection of an oath—truth, judgment, justice.

[9] 2 Cor. i. 23. [10] Gal. i. 20. [11] 3 Kings i. 17.
[12] St. Hieron in hunc. locum.
[13] Jerem. iv. 2.

1. TRUTH

Truth, then, holds the first place in an oath. What is asserted must be true and he who swears must believe what he swears to be true, founding his conviction not upon rash grounds or vain conjecture, but upon motives of undoubted credibility.

Truth is a condition not less necessary, as is clear, in a promissory than in an affirmatory oath. He who promises must be disposed to perform and fulfil his promise at the appointed time. As no conscientious man will promise to do what he considers opposed to the most holy Commandments and will of God; so, having promised and sworn to do what is lawful, he will never fail to adhere to his engagement, unless, perhaps, change of circumstances should so alter the complexion of the case, that he could not stand to his promise without incurring the displeasure and enmity of God. That truth is necessary to a lawful oath David also declares in these words: "He that sweareth to his neighbor, and deceiveth not." [14]

2. JUDGMENT

The second condition of an oath is judgment. An oath is not to be taken rashly and inconsiderately, but after mature deliberation and calm reflection. When about to take an oath, therefore, we should first consider whether it be or be not necessary, and whether the case, if well weighed, be of sufficient importance to demand an oath. Many other circumstances of time, place, etc., are also to be taken into consideration; and in taking an oath we should never be influenced by love or hatred, or any other passion, but by the nature and necessity of the case.

Unless this careful consideration and reflection precede, an oath must be rash and hasty; and of this character are the irreligious affirmations of those, who, on the most unimportant and trifling occasions, swear without thought or reason from the influence of bad habit alone. This is but too prevalent among buyers and sellers. The latter, to sell at the highest price, the former to purchase at the cheapest rate, make no scruple to strengthen with an oath their praise or dispraise of the goods on sale.

[14] Ps. xiv. 4.

Since, therefore, judgment and prudence are necessary, and since children are not able, on account of their tender years, to understand and judge accurately, Pope St. Cornelius decreed that an oath should not be administered to children before puberty, that is before their fourteenth year.

3. JUSTICE

The third and last condition of an oath is justice; a condition which is especially requisite in promissory oaths. Hence, if a person swear to do what is unjust or unlawful, he sins by taking the oath, and adds sin to sin by executing his promise. Of this the Gospel supplies an example. King Herod, bound by a rash oath, gave to a dancing girl the head of John the Baptist as a reward for her dancing.[15] Such was also the oath taken by the Jews, who, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, bound themselves by oath not to eat, until they had killed Paul.[16]

THE LAWFULNESS OF OATHS

These explanations being borne in mind, there can be no doubt that they who observe the above conditions and who guard their oaths with these qualities as with bulwarks, may swear with a safe conscience.[17]

This is easily established by many proofs. For the law of God, which is pure and holy, commands such an oath to be taken: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him only, and thou shalt swear by his name." [18] "All they," says David, "shall be praised that swear by him." [19]

The Scriptures also inform us that the Apostles, the lights of the Church, sometimes made use of oaths, as appears from the Epistles of St. Paul.[20]

Even the angels sometimes swear. "The angel," says St. John in his Apocalypse, "swore by him who lives for ever." [21]

In fine, God Himself, the Lord of angels, swears and, as we read in many passages of the Old Testament, has confirmed His

[15] Matt. xiv. 7. [16] Acts xxiii. 12. [17] Ps. xviii. 8.
[18] Deut. vi. 13. [19] Ps. lxii. 12.
[20] 2 Cor. i. 23. Philem. i. 8. 1 Thess. ii. 10.
[21] Apoc. x. 6.

promises with an oath. This He did to Abraham and to David.[22] Of the oath sworn by the Almighty David says: "The Lord hath sworn, and he will not repent: thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech." [23]

In fact, if we consider the matter attentively and in all its bearings, and examine the origin and purpose of an oath, it can be no difficult matter to explain the reasons why it is a laudable act. An oath has its *origin* in faith, by which we believe God to be the author of all truth, who cannot deceive or be deceived, "to whose eyes all things are naked and open," [24] who, in fine, superintends in an admirable manner all human affairs, whose providence governs the world. Filled with this faith we appeal to God as a witness of the truth, as a witness whom it would be wicked and impious to distrust.

With regard to the *end* of an oath, its scope and intent is to establish the justice and innocence of man, and to terminate disputes and contests. This is the doctrine of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews.[25]

Nor does this doctrine at all clash with these words of the Redeemer, recorded in St. Matthew: "You have heard that it was said to them of old; thou shalt not forswear thyself, but thou shalt perform thy oaths to the Lord; but I say to you not to swear at all; neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God; neither by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no; and that which is over and above these is of evil." [26]

It cannot be asserted that these words condemn oaths universally and under all circumstances; since we have already seen that the Apostles and even our Lord Himself made frequent use of them. The object of the Redeemer was rather to reprove the perverse opinion of the Jews, that the only thing to be avoided in an oath was a lie. Hence even on the most trivial occasions they did not hesitate to make frequent use of oaths, and to exact them

[22] Heb. vi. 17. Gen. xxii. 16. Exod. xxxiii. 1.
[23] Ps. cix. 4. [24] Heb. iv. 13.
[25] Heb. vi. 16. [26] Matt. v. 34–37.

from others. This practice the Redeemer condemns and reprobates, and teaches that an oath is never to be taken, unless necessity require it. The reason of this is that oaths have been instituted as remedies for human frailty. They are signs either of the inconstancy of him who takes them, or of the obstinacy of him who refuses to believe without them. Thus an oath has its source in the corruption of our nature, and can be justified by necessity alone.

When our Lord says: "Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no,"[27] He evidently forbids the habit of swearing in familiar conversation and on trivial matters. He therefore admonishes us particularly against an habitual propensity to swearing; and this admonition the pastor will impress deeply and repeatedly on the minds of the faithful. That countless evils grow out of the unrestrained habit of swearing is proved by the evidence of Scripture, and the testimony of the holy Fathers. Thus we read in Ecclesiasticus: "Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls";[28] and again: "A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house."[29] In the works of St. Basil and St. Augustine against lying, much more can be found on this subject.[30]

SINS AGAINST THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

So far we have considered what this Commandment requires, not what it prohibits. By the Second Commandment we are forbidden to take the name of God in vain. It is clear that he who swears rashly and without deliberation commits a grave sin. That this is a most serious sin these words declare: "Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain." In these words the Almighty would seem to assign the reason why a rash oath is so grievous a crime; namely, that it derogates from the majesty of Him whom we profess to recognise as our Lord and our God. This Commandment, therefore, forbids to swear falsely, because he who does not hesitate to appeal to God to witness falsehood,

[27] Matt. v. 37. [28] Eccl. xiii. 9. [29] Eccl. xxiii. 12.
[30] Basil. in Ps. 14, on the words: "qui jurat proximo suo"; Aug., lib. de mendacio, c. 14; see 12. q. 2. c. primum est.

offers a grievous injury to God, charging Him either with ignorance, as though the truth could be concealed from His all-seeing eye, or with malice and dishonesty, as though God could bear testimony to falsehood.

Among false swearers are to be numbered not only those who affirm as true what they know to be false, but also those who swear to what is really true, believing it to be false.[31] The essence of a lie consists in speaking contrary to one's belief and conviction; and such persons, therefore, as swear to what they believe to be false, are evidently guilty of a lie, and therefore of perjury.

On the same principle, he who swears to that which he thinks to be true, but which is really false, also incurs the guilt of perjury, unless he has used proper care and diligence to arrive at the truth. Although he swears according to his belief, he nevertheless sins against this Commandment.

Again he who binds himself by oath to the performance of anything, not intending to fulfil his promise, or, having had the intention, neglects its performance, is also guilty of perjury. This equally applies to those who, having bound themselves to God by vow, neglect its fulfillment.

This Commandment is also violated, if justice, which is one of the three conditions of an oath, be wanting. Hence he who swears to commit a mortal sin, for example, to perpetrate murder, violates this Commandment, although he should have really intended to commit the crime, and his oath should have possessed what we before pointed out as a necessary condition of every oath, that is, truth.

To these are to be added oaths sworn through a sort of contempt, such as an oath not to observe the Evangelical counsels of celibacy and poverty. None, it is true, are obliged to embrace these counsels, but by swearing not to observe them, one contemns and despises them.

This Commandment is also sinned against, and the second condition of an oath, which is "judgment," is violated by swearing on slight grounds and mere conjecture, even though what is sworn be true, and believed to be true by him who swears. For not-

[31] Aug., de verbis Apost., serm. 28, quoted in 21. q. 2. cap. homines.

withstanding its truth, such an oath is not unmixed with a sort of falsehood, seeing that he who swears with such indifference exposes himself to extreme danger of perjury.

To swear by false gods is likewise to swear falsely. What more opposed to truth than to appeal to lying and false deities as to the true God?[32]

Scripture, when it prohibits perjury says: "Thou shalt not profane the name of thy God,"[33] thereby forbidding all irreverence not only to His name, but also to those things to which, in accordance with this Commandment, reverence is due. Of this nature is the Word of God, the majesty of which has been recognised and revered not only by the pious, but also sometimes by the impious, as we read in Judges of Eglon, king of the Moabites.[34] But he who, to support heresy and impiety, distorts the Sacred Scriptures from their genuine and true meaning, is guilty of the most flagrant irreverence towards the Divine Word; and of this we are admonished by these words of the prince of the Apostles: "There are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."[35]

It is also a shameful irreverence of the Scripture, to pervert the words and sentences which it contains, and which should be mentioned with due reverence, to some profane purpose, such as scurrility, fable, vanity, flattery, detraction, superstition, satire, and the like. Such profanation of the Divine Word the Council of Trent commands to be severely reprehended.[36]

In the next place, as they honor God who, in their affliction implore His help, so they, who invoke not His aid, deny Him due honor; and these David rebukes when he says: "They have not called upon the Lord, they trembled for fear where there was no fear."[37]

Still more enormous is the guilt of those who, with impure and impious lips, dare to curse or blaspheme the holy name of God, that name which is to be blessed and praised above measure by all His creatures, or even the names of the Saints who reign with Him in glory. So atrocious and horrible is this crime that the

[32] Aug. epist. 54.
[33] Lev. xix. 12.
[34] Judges iii. 20.
[35] Pet. iii. 16.
[36] Sess. 4. at the end.
[37] Ps. xiii. 5. et liii. 6.

Sacred Scriptures, sometimes when speaking of blasphemy use the word "blessing." [38]

THE SANCTION OF THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

As, however, the dread of punishment has often a powerful effect in checking the tendency to sin, the pastor, in order the more effectively to move the minds of men and the more easily to induce to an observance of this Commandment, will diligently explain the remaining words, which are, as it were, its appendix, and which run thus: "FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT SHALL TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD HIS GOD IN VAIN." [39]

In the first place the pastor will teach that with very good reason has God joined threats to this Commandment. For we are thus taught at once the grievousness of sin and the goodness displayed in our regard by a beneficent God, who, far from desiring the death of the sinner, deters us by these salutary threats from incurring His severity, doubtless in order that we may experience His kindness rather than His anger. The pastor will urge this consideration with indefatigable earnestness, in order that the faithful may be made sensible of the grievousness of the crime, may detest it still more, and may employ increased care and caution to avoid its commission.

He will also observe how prone Christians are to this sin; since it was not sufficient to give the command, but also necessary to accompany it with threats. The advantages to be derived from this thought are indeed incredible; for as nothing is more injurious than a listless security, so the knowledge of our own weakness is attended with the most salutary consequences.

He will next observe that the punishment, which awaits the violation of this Commandment, is not fixed and determinate. The threat is general: it declares that he who is guilty of the violation shall not escape unpunished. The chastisements, therefore, with which we are every day visited, should impress this crime upon our minds. It is easy to conjecture that men are afflicted with

[38] 3 Kings xxi. 13. Job i. 11. et ii. 9.
[39] Exod. xx. 7.

heavy calamities because they violate this Commandment. This thought should inspire greater caution for the future.

Deterred, therefore, by a holy dread, the faithful should use every exertion to avoid this sin. If "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account on the day of judgment," what shall we say of those heinous crimes which involve great contempt of the divine name?

Sermons

The Holy Name of God

BY THE REV. G. LEE, C.S.SP.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.—Matt. vi. 9.

INTRODUCTION

To be right-minded in religious matters is to view them as did our Lord, for He is the wisdom of God. Even as man He is altogether full of grace and understanding; and as He is explicitly our Way, our Truth, and our Life, there can be no value in the directions, standards, tendencies which we adopt, unless they are modeled and measured on Him. He is, of course, the sovereign exemplar in all His acts and words; yet there are special points which may be taken as peculiarly illustrative of His great lesson. His devotion to His Father's name is characteristic. He most lovingly revered it, most watchfully honored it, most filially championed it. We see that He makes it the first duty of all who would pray aright, the first obligation of all His worshiping brethren, to seek that God's name be sanctified: Hallowed be thy name! And when His own prayer is bursting into the final vehemence of its suffering appeal, the words are: "Father, glorify thy name" (John xii. 28). He even seems to sum up all His labors, all His teaching and ministry, in this one thing: "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world" (Ib. xvii. 6).

His Church, following, as she always does, in His footsteps, keeps this devotion to the divine name in the very forefront of her doctrine and practice. 'Tis like an abridgment of her liturgy and life. From the early hour at which she baptizes us in the name of

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to the last moment when she blesses us in that same name, this devotion is communicated to us by every movement of her lips and by every touch of her hand.

The name of God can evidently be taken for God—as Holy Scripture often takes it—and then devotion to it is simply all religion. But to the pronouncing, the hearing, the ordinary verbal use of it, there attaches and has always attached an immensity of special obligation and special worship. Men may use it well, and they may use it ill; our duty in the matter can be brought before us under the three terms: Reverence, respect, love.

I. REVERENCE FOR GOD'S NAME

Reverence for the name of God is so embedded both in nature and grace, that if its claims are at all understood they are immediately admitted. To name a person is to bring him up before us; and the person named God is our Creator: hence our infinite and infinitely worshipful Master. There is not an atom of our being, either bodily or spiritual, that should not, spontaneously, at the sound of that name cry out, "Lord!" The Psalmist is but voicing the creature's true apostrophe when he exclaims: "O Lord our Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth!" (Ps. viii); and the same creature's necessary reflection should be: "Holy and terrible is his name" (Ps. cx).

With earliest revelation there comes the impressive fact that the Sovereign Being's true name cannot be pronounced by men nor given to them. It is tremblingly represented by four mysterious characters to which the High Priest, when in the Temple, may give awe-struck sound: other worshipers must reverently use substitutes for the ineffable word. The great fear of desecrating God's name, implied in this practice, had undeniably an abiding influence on the speech and also on the thought of the people. When their all-holy Lord was recalled to them they instantly bowed their heads and restrained their tongues. If other idle words were not blameless, surely the idle pronouncing of so awful a name could not escape condemnation. In what is styled "the discipline of the mouth," their wise men instructed the Jews not to let "the naming of God be usual" with them, nor to "be accus-

tomed to swearing"; for "everyone that sweareth, and nameth, shall not be wholly pure from sin." And "a man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity; and a scourge shall not depart from his house" (Ecclus. xxiii).

Now, though Christians approach God with more filial familiarity than did the Jews, their use of His name should certainly be none the less observant: rather should it be more delicately, more tenderly reverential. Why introduce it uselessly, trivially? If as a prayerful exclamation, then let it clearly be a prayer. And as to idle swearing, hear the Son of Man recommending us not to swear at all, because whatever we may swear by has some relation to our God. It should be, as He indicates, unnecessary, since "Yes—yes," "No—no" suffices; and, as things really go among men, it is injurious for no one believes the trivial, especially the frequent swearer; and his house—that is his company—is under the scourge of having to listen to him.

But if reverence for the name of God prohibits its merely idle use, much more does it prohibit its offensive use. To introduce it in combination with words otherwise vile and sinful is horrid profanity. The common, wretchedly common, practice of uttering it in anger—though it be just but uttered—is an intolerable abuse; yet men who really dislike sin often weakly enslave themselves to that disgusting habit. Of course, anger is a first weakness, and so where it is shown no great manliness can be expected; but if religious principle be for the moment forgotten, the mere proprieties of life, respect for others and for one's own place in human society, should give the strength to keep a mouth closed when what may escape out of it is likely to be malodorous. And like anger, the association of anything unjust or foul with holy names is always deplorable and outrageous. Though their use in such connection be not meant as additional sin, nor perhaps so apprehended, yet a Catholic, given at all to coarse-mouthedness, would do well to remember the ancient warning: "Nor shalt thou defile the name of thy God: I am the Lord" (Lev. xviii. 21). Even St. Paul's word to his disciple, though it has other wide senses, can here have a pertinent application: "Let everyone depart from iniquity who nameth the name of the Lord" (2 Tim. ii. 19).

Under the head of reverence to God's name there should be little need of referring to the injury that is worse than irreverence, to the sin which early worshipers were afraid to name, blasphemy. That indeed is a word to no purpose, a scurrility not to be mentioned among those who are called saints. In some languages happily its explicit introduction is not common, though forms of expression which imply it are often assumed both ignorantly and viciously. As a fearfully impious sin it has excited the horror of all creatures who know themselves to be creatures; and accounts of its immediate punishment are current in every land. Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, spoke many things against God and wrote letters full of blasphemy; then an angel cut off his army and drove himself home to be slain by his children. Similarly fared the blaspheming Philistine, Goliath, and the blaspheming apostate, Julian. Many others may be cited from more recent history.

A priest does not like, my brethren, to suppose that any person present needs admonition against this most fatal crime, this most unchristian iniquity. But if some man or boy finds that he makes the least approach to it, he should seriously recall the sovereign decree: "He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die" (Lev. xxiv. 16). No doubt the Lord of all mercy offers forgiveness even to blasphemers, though their offense has a certain desperateness about it. Let them, at least, hasten to take advantage of so special a mercy, and be cleansed from this abnormal villainy, doing "penance to give him glory" whose long-suffering is so adorable.

2. RESPECT FOR THE NAME OF GOD

Respect for God's name may be taken as something different from that reverence for it which we have been considering. Respect bears particularly on the consequences of introducing Him, by introducing His name, into our proceedings. Things cannot be the same as they were before He was called to take part in them, the same as if in their regard no sacred appeal, adjuration, offering, had ever been made. When the Almighty has been invoked, He may be counted *on*, He must be counted *with*; for import necessarily attaches to the drawing down of His name.

This truth should be impressed on us by the fact that a special divine precept sanctions its subject-matter. The Second Commandment runs exactly to this point: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"—*in vain,* that is *not in truth,* as St. Augustine explains (Serm. viii); and if not without truth of words and things, neither *without respect.*

That a man who is himself a liar, should in order to be believed call in God's testimony and yet deceive, is an outrage on the eternal truth. The perjurer, as such an offender is styled, makes —as far as it depends on him—his Creator a partner in his deception; and this the All-holy can never endure. Our Lord was putting the extreme case, the absolutely intolerable and impossible case, when He urged on the prevaricating Jews that if He said He did not know His Father, He should be like them—a liar. The perjurer lies and solemnly asks God to father his lie! Surely God is patient.

Besides the unspeakable injury to God's majesty implied in all perjury, there is great wrong done to human society by false witness, especially in public affairs. Under authoritative demand for testimony, to swear to what one does not know, or to the contrary of what one does know, is to undermine the civic edifice, to vitiate the first principles of men's intercourse one with another. If no sacredness secures truth in word and declaration, where or how is it to be found? With pagans of any civilization, as with Hebrews and Christians, "an oath for confirmation is the end of all their controversy" (Heb. vi. 16). 'Tis, then, at once a matter of humanity and of religion to exclude perjury and close all its dangerous approaches.

Now our Catechism puts on the same line as taking false oaths another offense that may not seem quite similar: this is, the breaking of lawful oaths. In malice the sins are most closely related, the malice being the absence of respect for God's name, the denial of import to its introduction. Notice, my brethren, how comprehensive is the prohibition to take that name in vain, and how explicit the menace that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless" who shall do so. Guiltless he certainly cannot be, though the degree of his guilt may vary according to the *vainness* of his swearing. 'Tis vain, my brethren, to swear in promise to what

you cannot perform; if you know your inability, your swearing is even false: 'tis most plainly false when you have no intention of doing what you promise. To swear to do what is morally wrong is not only vain but sacrilegious, because of the attempted connection between God's authority and man's iniquity. An immoral act can have no sanction, much less the sanction of a sacred oath; and Catholics in any obscurity on this very practical point should seek enlightenment from their Catechism, if necessary from their confessor. But when the thing promised under oath is possible and right, then wantonly to neglect the doing of it is to disrespect God's name. If He has been called in to bear witness that you will keep a lawful promise, and if it remains lawful and fairly within your power, while you prove unfaithful, how can you escape involving His honor in what people rightly call your perjury and perfidy? Be careful, therefore, my brethren, about taking promissory oaths; but if you have lawfully taken them, be equally careful about their fulfilment.

Obligatory promises made to God Himself are of further and still higher sacredness. They concern some greater good, are direct worship of the Creator, and are called vows. It is certainly most excellent to make them—provided, of course, that they be observed. "Vow ye, and pay to the Lord your God" (Ps. lxxv), sings holy David; and his wise son adds: "It is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised" (Eccl. v. 4). God is not alone invoked in a vow, but is also asked to accept an offering; the withdrawal or canceling of that consecrated oblation—without His permission or the permission of those who hold His place—is sacrilegious affront and mockery. Hence have all religious-minded people everywhere entertained fear and abhorrence of the violation of vows. Hence, too, though great the merit of such personal offerings, they are not usually to be made without safeguards and solemnities proportioned to their consequence, not, especially, without the direction and authorization of those who have charge of our souls.

3. LOVE OF GOD'S NAME

The third and best exercise of the hallowing of God's name consists in loving it. If we truly love it, we shall not only rever-

ence and respect it, but also proclaim and glorify it. The love of the divine name gives us a title to exultant and secure happiness both here and hereafter. "All they that love thy name shall glory in thee," sings the Psalmist (Ps. v); and concerning the promised heavenly Sion he adds: "They that love his name shall dwell therein" (Ps. lxviii). To love God's name ought to be easy and natural for those who remember that it represents Himself, who is our supreme good; and as often as we hear it we should hear also some such pleading as that of the inspired lawgiver with the undutiful people: "Is not he thy Father, that hath possessed thee, and made thee and created thee?" (Deut. xxxii. 6.)

The confident strength it inspires is a winning reason for loving it; for if a vain use of it is pernicious, a believing use is inexpressibly efficacious and salutary. In both the Old Covenant and the New we have the mighty promise: "It shall come to pass that every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel ii. 32; Rom. x. 13). Hence in all dangers and struggles the loving invocation of the divine name insures divine help. God is pledged to the man who calls on Him: "I will protect him," He says, "because he hath known my name" (Ps. xc). And His servants kept Him up to His promise; for, on occasion, they cried out: "But thou, O Lord, art among us, and thy name is called upon by us: forsake us not" (Jer. xiv. 9). Certainly He did not forsake them: His hand was with them, their shield in peril, their sword in battle, as long as love of His name taught them to invoke it trustingly. See the youthful David going forth to answer the challenge of the blasphemous giant who had terrified armies. To the horrid threats and imprecations of the grim idolator the ruddy shepherd boy has but to answer: "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts"—and he conquers magnificently. So, too, my brethren, may we conquer and overcome every adversary, every opposition, if we know how to use the name of our God.

For us, Christians, there should be particular facility and delight in invoking the Lord, for we know Him more intimately than did even the best Hebrews, we know personally what to call Him. 'Twas of us He said: "Therefore, my people shall know my name in that day: for I myself that spoke, behold I am here"

(Is. lii. 6). He is here, He is one of us, and Jesus is His name—His name in the message of the angel, in the declaration of the foster-father, in the heart of the immaculate mother, in the decree of the eternal Father, in His own choice, in the Holy Ghost by whom He was incarnate and by whom alone we can say—the Lord Jesus! How glorious to have that name in our possession! But how pitiful not to use it!—or to abuse it! Jesus, Lord! thy name is sweet; 'tis as oil poured out, a salutary balsam. 'Tis as honey and the honeycomb. With thy saints even we may repeat: nothing sweeter is sung, nothing more harmonious is heard, nothing more consoling is conceived, than Jesus, Son of God, Son of the Virgin!

CONCLUSION

Conclude, then, my brethren, to make your daily and hourly repetition of the great *"hallowed be thy name"* a reality and a rule of life. That opening petition of the *Our Father* may well be taken to express our whole duty to God and to Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. It especially determines our proper use of holy names, most of all of that one name, the only one "given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Fear of God's name we are to entertain, because of its sacred greatness, because of its divinity; but a believing, a trusting, a loving fear. Not for us the fear of the perfidious enemies of the Saviour of the world, who, having slain Him and then heard that He was risen from the dead, shuddered at the preaching of His name and wanted to prevent all mention of it. Our fear is to be one of loyal respect, of filial reverence, of fond affection. 'Tis to be a fear that our best naming of that name may be too unworthy, a fear that we may take from its glory and hinder its efficacy. We must aspire to fear in some such way as did the Virgin mother when, in her exultant *Magnificat*, she paused to say: "And holy is his name"; even to fear as did her Son, of whom it was prophesied that He should be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord. That blessed fear leads on to love, is accompanied by it and submerged in it. If we have genuine fear of the Lord's name we shall infallibly have that *equal love* of it for which the Church constantly prays: *timorem pariter et amorem;* and then great must

be our confidence that of each of us individually the Master we follow may repeat: "I will write upon him the name of my God," and that to us all collectively may be fulfilled His crowning promise: "They shall see his face and his name shall be on their foreheads" (Apoc. iii. 12; xxii. 4). In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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SUNDAY AFTER CIRCUMCISION

SUBJECT

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: THE DUTIES OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN

TEXT

(*From Gospel of Epiphany.*)

And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his Mother.—Matt. ii. 11.

(*From Gospel of Sunday after Circumcision.*)

Who (Joseph) arose, and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.—Matt. ii. 21.

Analysis

Introduction. The Gospels which are read at this time pertain to the infancy of our Divine Saviour, and hence give us glimpses of the daily life of the Holy Family. There we see the tender solicitude which was exercised by the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph in caring for the infant needs of our Lord, and in pro-

tecting Him from danger. In this holy household, both at Bethlehem, and later on at Nazareth, we behold the model of the Christian family, an admirable example of the manner in which Christian parents should provide for and bring up their children.

I. Duties which parents owe to the temporal welfare of their children. 1. Parents are obliged to provide for their children's maintenance, *i.e.*, food, lodging, clothing and medical care, such as are necessary for their health, happiness, and state of life. 2. Parents should so train and educate their children that, at the proper age, the children may know how and be able to earn their own living and choose some trade or profession for which they are suited. It is a gross injustice to children to put them out of the family circle into some public institution, unless strict necessity requires. 3. Parents should not show favoritism between their children, and should not disinherit them, except for gravest reasons.

II. Duties which parents owe to the spiritual welfare of their children. 1. Children should be baptized without delay, and from their earliest years must be instructed by their parents in their prayers, and the chief mysteries and duties of their religion. It is simply an evasion of duty on the part of parents to presume that children must learn these things at church and in the schoolroom, although parents, if possible, must also see that their children have the benefit of a Catholic school. 2. Parents should train their children in the practice of their religious duties and in piety, such as the saying of their morning and evening prayers, grace before and after meals, going to Mass on Sundays and Holydays, going to confession and Communion, and should inculcate, by word and example, right principles of conduct. It is important, however, that parents use good judgment and prudence in all these matters, so as not to disgust, or so unduly restrict and hamper their children that when the parental authority ceases, they will go to extremes in an opposite direction. 3. Parents should jealously guard their children from harm by studying their dispositions and keeping them away from bad books, companions,

places, amusements, occasions, etc. 4. It is the duty of parents to correct the faults and bad manners of their children from their first years, since this is more easily accomplished in the beginning than later on. Corrections should be firm, neither too severe, nor too mild, and not more often administered than necessary, lest they lose their meaning and efficacy; they should be adapted to the circumstances of age, character, and the fault committed.

Conclusion. 1. As a rule children are an index of the home and parents. If the children are bad and ill trained it is a sign the parents are the same. Exceptions to this rule are very rare. 2. Parents are the makers of society for weal or woe. 3. The salvation of both parents and children depends largely on the home training. 4. If the Holy Family were made the model of the Christian families of to-day, how different would be the condition of society and of its individual members!

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

Fourth Commandment

duties of parents towards their children

As the law of God commands children to honor, obey, and respect their parents so are there reciprocal duties which parents owe to their children. Parents are obliged to bring up their children in the knowledge and practice of religion, to give them the best rules for the regulation of their lives; so that, instructed in the truths of religion, and prepared to make these truths the guiding principles of their conduct through life, they may preserve inviolate their fidelity to God, and serve Him in holiness. This duty is beautifully illustrated in the conduct of the parents of Susanna.[1]

The pastor, therefore, will admonish parents to be to their children guides in the virtues of justice, chastity, modesty, and holiness.

[1] Dan. xiii. 3.

THREE THINGS TO BE AVOIDED BY PARENTS

He will also admonish them to guard particularly against three things, in which they but too often transgress.

In the first place, they are not by words or actions to exercise too much harshness towards their children. This is the instruction of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians: "Fathers," he says, "provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." [2] For there is danger that the spirit of the child may be broken, and he become abject and timid. Hence instead of indulging intemperate passion, the parent should reprove in the spirit of parental correction, not of revenge.

Should a fault be committed which requires reproof and chastisement, the parent should not, on the other hand, by undue indulgence, overlook its correction. Children are often spoiled by too much lenity and indulgence on the part of their parents. The pastor, therefore, will deter from such excessive mildness by the warning example of Heli, the high priest, who, on account of over indulgence to his sons, was visited with the heaviest chastisements.[3]

Finally, in the instruction and education of their children, let them not follow the pernicious example of many parents who propose to themselves aims that are unworthy. Many there are whose sole concern is to leave their children wealth, riches, an ample and splendid fortune; who encourage them not to piety and religion, or to honorable and virtuous pursuits, but to avarice, and an increase of wealth, and who, provided their children are rich and wealthy, are regardless of their good name and eternal salvation. Can anything more shameful be thought or expressed? Of such parents it is true to say, that instead of bequeathing wealth to their children, they leave them rather their own wickedness and crimes for an inheritance; and instead of conducting them to heaven, lead them to eternal perdition.

The pastor, therefore, will impress on the minds of parents salutary principles and will exhort them to imitate the virtuous example of Tobias, that having thus trained up their children to

[2] Col. iii. 21.
[3] 1 Kings ii. 3, 4.

the service of God, and to holiness of life, they may, in turn, experience at their hands abundant fruit of filial affection, respect, and obedience.

Sermons

Parents and the Parochial School

BY THE REV. DOM BEDE CAMM, O.S.B., B.A. (OXON)

Take this child and nurse him for me.—Exodus ii. 9.

INTRODUCTION

On the placid surface of a mighty river hidden among the bulrushes and water-lilies, there lay a tiny boat in which a little babe of three months old lay quietly sleeping. Watchful eyes were near him, anxious hearts were beating for him, an agonized mother's prayers went up to heaven for him; but he all unconscious lay smiling in the sunshine. And suddenly there was a stir by the water's edge, and a procession of stately maidens, their tresses bound with lotus flowers, came down to the river side. And among them, the tallest and stateliest of the band, walked one with a royal circlet clasped around her brow, clad in vesture of imperial purple. It was the daughter of the great King, and the men in the harvest fields bowed low as she passed by.

She approached the water's edge, and her eyes rested with pleasure on the fair landscape, the mighty river slumbering in the sunshine, the clusters of palm tress, that rose tall and graceful on the banks, the lotus flowers lifting their pure white cups to heaven, the gorgeous temples carven with all the skill of Egypt, and on the horizon, across the golden sand the stately silhouettes of the pyramids. But surely something stirred amid the tall rushes at her feet. A little cry, faint and low, is heard. She looks again and her keen eyes make out the little boat of rushes. Her interest is at once aroused, she sends one of her maidens to draw it from the water, and at the sight of the lovely babe thus strangely rescued, her interest quickens into royal pity. She is childless, and long has she yearned for one to bear her name, for one upon whom she may lavish the wealth of love which is penned

up in her woman's heart. She will take this child for her own; he shall be her adopted son, and she will thus save him from a cruel death, for she easily guesses that it is one of the Hebrew children condemned to die by her father's edict, and will also bring him up as the child of a princess should be brought up. But first she must find a nurse for him.

And now there timidly approaches a little Hebrew maid, who, hidden not far off has been a spectator of this strange scene. With beating heart she makes obeisance and asks timidly, "Shall I go and call to thee a Hebrew woman to nurse the babe?" The princess answers, "Go!" Oh, how eagerly, how breathlessly does that little maiden run to fetch the mother, the poor mother, who as a last resource of despair has thus exposed her babe upon the river, rather than see it slain before her eyes. She comes trembling; but the good princess receives her with a gracious smile. "Take this child," she says, "and nurse it for me!"

Picture the mother's astonishment and joy. She feared her babe was lost to her forever. With streaming eyes she had torn it from her breast and laid it on the bosom of the Nile, and now he is given back to her, and given her by the daughter of the great king himself.

"Take this child and nurse it for *me?*" For *me?* What! then it is not hers any more, it belongs to another?

Yes, the princess says, "it is mine, now, and you will take care of it for me, you will watch over it, you will bring it up for me. Remember its royal destiny. I have adopted this babe as my heir, you have to bring him up in such a way that some day he may take his place at my royal court, that he may be worthy to stand in the presence of the 'King.'"

Do you think, my brethren, that that poor mother would do her utmost to show her gratitude to her royal benefactress? Henceforth, this child would not be as the rest. She would remind him as he grew older, and she would ever remind herself of his royal destiny and his future state. Many things which might be tolerated in mere Hebrew peasant children, would not be worthy of one who was the adopted child of royalty. She would gaze upon him with awe as she thought of the high place in the king's court which he would one day fill. Her affection was mingled, if I may

say so, with reverence, for this babe was no common child, it was the child of destiny, the inheritor of a kingdom.

DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS

My brethren, these things are a parable, and a parable whose meaning is not surely far to seek or hard to interpret. Every Christian parent is in truth in the position of that Hebrew mother, to whom the daughter of Pharaoh gave back the infant Moses.

For who is that royal lady but our holy mother, the Church, who takes the babe out of the waters of baptism and claims it henceforth for her own? It is true, she gives it back to her parents that they may bring it up; that she lays it on the mother's breast that she may nurse it; but at the same time she clearly tells them that they must bring it up, not for themselves, but for her, that they are but the guardians chosen by her, the true mother, that they must ever remember that the child she gives them is to be educated for a royal destiny, and is to be brought up as becomes the heir to a throne. "Take this child and nurse him for *me*," says the king's daughter, holy Mother Church, to the Christian mother. Take it as a precious deposit entrusted to your care, for which some day you will have to give account to me, to me and to the king.

And thus we see and understand, and oh, would that every one of us did see and did understand the duties and responsibilities of the Christian parent. Almighty God speaking by the Church, says in fact, to each Christian parent, as they stand at the baptismal font in which their babe has just been regenerated, new-born to a life of grace, "You have offered this child, the fruit of My blessing, to Me. I love it, and will henceforth be its true father and mother. Now, I lend it to you, but with the strictest obligation to bring it up for Me, and to restore it to Me in the same state as that in which I give it to you. I shall demand it of your hands some day again, and woe to you if you betray your trust. This child is now a child of God, a vessel of grace, a temple of the Holy Ghost, an heir of the kingdom of heaven, and it is your place to see that you bring it up for this high destiny. It is your duty to take care that it does not lose the great inheritance which I destine for it, that it does not grow up unworthy of the heavenly

throne; woe to you, if, when I ask for it again, I find it no more mine, but the slave of my enemy, a vessel of sin, a brand for the eternal fire."

PARENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF THEIR CHILDREN

For, my brethren, let us remind ourselves of the undoubted fact that the souls of your children are in your power. Think, I beseech you, of the *vastness of your obligation*. Others share it in a less degree, of others too an account will be required—of the teacher of the school, of the confessor, the parish priest, the master or mistress, each will have to render an account, but how much more the parents! You have to bring up your children for God and Holy Church. They owe you life, but life is not sufficient. Oh, the brute beasts teach us in very truth a lesson here. Do they desert their little ones till they are full grown? Do they neglect to teach them what is necessary for them to fulfil the end for which God created them? Only the ostrich "leaveth her eggs in the sand," and abandons her offspring, and of her it is said in Holy Writ: "She is hardened against her young ones as though they were not hers, because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath He imparted to her understanding" (Job xxxix. 14).

But this is an exception in nature; we see the parent birds feeding their young ones in the nest, and teaching them how to spread their wings in flight. We see the hen, so timid as a rule, ruffle up her feathers and fight in defence of her chickens; we see her teaching them to seek their food and to run beneath the shelter of her wings when danger is nigh. The very beasts of prey love their offspring with a fierce affection, and die willingly in their defence.

Thus they nurse, feed, protect and assist their young, proving that this is a law planted in their hearts by nature. But how much more has man this duty—man whose offspring is born more feeble and defenceless than the young of animals or birds, and who need so much more time to come to perfection?

Indeed, as a rule, parents do not so greatly neglect the care of their children's bodies. Some sad cases, indeed, there are, of unnatural

parents who ill-treat and neglect their little ones. But such cases, thank God, are rare among Catholics; and it is not of this that I wish to speak to-day.

DUTY OF GOOD EXAMPLE

For after all, what is the end for which your children, for which we all of us have been created? Is it to get on in the world, to obtain a good position, or to make a rich marriage, or save up a fortune? We know from the catechism the answer of God's Church. "God made me to know Him and love Him and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next." This then is the end for which we have to educate our children; we have in a word to bring them up *for God*. And it will not do for the parent to say, "Oh, I leave that to the priest or the schoolmaster!" No one can relieve him of this responsibility. None can supply the parents' place in this regard. Of what use are the exhortations of the priest, are the lessons of the school, if at home the child finds his parents neglecting those very sacred duties which he has been told are the most important of life? Who has not heard the sad remark of some little child: "Oh, yes, I go to Mass; but when I am grown up, I shan't go any more, like father." And yet so blind are parents that over and over again one has been told by a negligent Catholic: "It is true, Father, that I don't go often myself to Mass, but I always send the children." They do not go themselves, and the children soon learn to copy their example. Instead of going to church they play about the streets with unbelieving and vicious companions, and learn their lessons in the devil's school instead of in God's house. They well know that the careless parents will not find them out, for they will not be there themselves. And even if the child goes while still at school, as soon as it has left school, it too often leaves the Church as well, and the pastor's heart aches as he looks over the benches where they used to sit, and where he finds them now no more. Where are the Catholic young men and women of this great town to-day? How many of them have fulfilled their obligation to hearing Mass? They are not found who return to give glory to God, save a small proportion, a faithful remnant.

And whose fault is it? I answer unhesitatingly: that of their parents.

CHRISTIAN TRAINING OF CHILDREN

I wish you, my dearest brethren, to-day, to ask yourselves: "Do I realize to the full my responsibility for the *souls* of my children? Do I really strive to bring them up for God? Do I remember that they are a sacred deposit entrusted to me by the Almighty, a deposit for which I shall have to render a very strict account?"

St. Paul tells parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." "For this they are responsible," cries St. Chrysostom, but alas, how few think of it.

But at the Judgment Day, you will not be asked what fortune you left your children, or what position you were able to get for them, you will be asked if you have watched over their souls, if you have trained them for God. Alas! there are some parents who neglect this duty so frightfully, that it would seem that if they had been commanded by God under pain of eternal damnation to bring up their children for the devil, they could not have done more than they do now. Such parents as these, by evil example, draw their little ones down to hell. They impress upon those infant minds the lessons of a wicked world and a Godless age, they teach those little lips to blaspheme almost before they know how to pray, they inculcate on them the dishonest maxims of the world in order that they may get on well in life. They forget that if their children lose their immortal souls, they will hardly thank their parents much for the trouble they took for their worldly advancement. What shall we say of a mother, who, instead of watching over the innocence of her daughter teaches her to dress so as to attract attention, sows in her young mind the seeds of vanity and display, and brings her up with the idea that to get married is the end for which she was created? What of a father who takes his boy to the saloon, what of parents who let their children run wild in the streets? What again of those Catholic parents who do not hesitate to send their children to a Protestant school, on the slightest pretext of convenience, to save a walk of half a mile, or because they have quarrelled with the priest.

Others again will not hesitate to risk their children's souls at a Protestant middle-class or upper-class school, on the pretext that there is no Catholic school of the kind in the town, and that they cannot let them go to the parochial school. By this silly pride they expose their children's innocent souls to the most frightful perils. I am myself a convert, brought up in a Protestant public-school of the very highest name and reputation, and I do not hesitate to tell you that were I a parent, I would sooner see my sons dead before my eyes than send them to such a school of vice and immorality. True, it is that *some* pass unscathed through the flames and come out from them strengthened in character; but who would knowingly expose innocence to so terrible a trial?

Some parents are like those of the blind man cured by Jesus. "We know this is our son, but who hath *opened his eyes we know not.*"

DUTY OF VIGILANCE AND CORRECTION

A good parent must be Argus-eyed. He must be watchful over his children by day and night. He must see that they are trained in habits of implicit and unquestioning obedience, that the first signs of evil propensities be checked and corrected; he must not shrink from punishment where it is necessary, lest he incur the doom of the high priest Heli of whom God said, "I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not." And why was this? Because he was foolishly fond and indulgent, because he would not correct or punish. The Christian parent dare not leave this duty to another. God has given him authority such as none other can exercise over the hearts of his children. A child's character is like wax or soft clay. At first you have no difficulty in moulding it as you will. If you neglect to do so the fault will be at your door, and the efforts of other teachers will be of little avail. I know that most of you are good parents who bring up your children like Queen Blanche, and the mother of St. Edmund did. God will reward you, and some day your children will rise up and call you blessed.

NECESSITY OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Can we then do without Catholic schools? No, indeed! My argument is rather to enforce on you the sense of their absolute necessity and of their priceless worth.

The principal responsibility of parents consists as we have seen in training their child for God. Now, the occupations of most parents are such that they have very little time to spend in instructing their little ones in the catechism, in teaching them the truths of our holy religion. But this fact does not excuse them from their duty or from their responsibility. What they cannot do by themselves, let them do by others, that is, let them take care that their children attend a Catholic school and that they attend it regularly. They must at the same time ever remember that after all home is *the* school, and that if the teaching of home differs either in precept or example from that of school, the souls of their children must inevitably suffer from the contrast. They have to see that their children practice at home the good lessons they have learnt at school. And thus the good influence of the Christian home will second and support the teaching of the Christian school, and the little ones of Christ's flock will grow up in the love of God and Holy Church, and in the fulfillment of their duties both to God and man.

And it is my duty to-day to plead with you to support the schools of this parish. I am sure you will do so most generously, as you have ever done, and that you will thus help to lessen the load of anxiety which weighs down your excellent clergy. You will do it for their sakes, you will do it for your own sakes, and you will do it for God's sake. For their sakes, for it is right and just that you should relieve them from temporal anxieties, that they may be the freer to give themselves to their spiritual work. For your sakes, because to support the schools of your parish is the most important duty that rests on you as parents and as Catholics. There may be among you those who have had to grieve over wilful and disobedient children. Perhaps they have realized to-day as they had not done before, how much they have to blame themselves for this, the greatest sorrow of their lives. What can they do to make up for the neglect of the past? Let

me remind you of the words of Holy Writ. "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the most High God, and to all them that give it."

Pray for forgiveness and for the conversion of those dear souls entrusted to you, and at the same time buy the favor of heaven with abundant alms. And what object more worthy of your alms than the support of schools which ensure a Christian education for the little ones of Christ's flock?

And for *God's* sake give! Give abundantly, according to your means; give, whether you are yourselves parents or not, in thanksgiving for the blessings of a Christian Education; give, to secure this grace for others, and above all give in order to console the Sacred Heart of Him who cries still to us so lovingly and so pathetically, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Home Training

BY THE REV. A. B. SHARPE, M.A.

These words which I command thee shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children.—Deut. vi.

IMPORTANCE OF HOME TRAINING

Of all the responsibilities which life imposes on human beings there is none greater than that of parenthood. It is all the heavier, because it is mainly a responsibility to God, and only in a very minor degree to man. Within very wide limits, parents may bring up their children as they please; all that society requires of them is that they should provide sufficient maintenance for their children, and take some sort of precaution against their growing up in a state of complete illiteracy. But God requires much more of parents, or of those who take their place. The training of children is, from the Christian point of view, nothing less than a branch of what St. Chrysostom calls "the art of arts, the direction of souls." Of it the same Saint says: "What is a greater task than to guide the souls and mould the character of the young? I hold him a greater artist than any painter or sculptor who knows

how to form the youthful mind." It is to this "art" that parents are called; and on the way in which they respond to this vocation the future, humanly speaking, of their children, and their own eternal welfare in great measure depends. Just as a well-fed and well-cared for child will normally grow up into a strong man or woman, so one that is trained in Christian duty, and nourished by divine grace will grow up into a well-principled and well-conducted Catholic; and on the other hand, just as a moment's neglect or carelessness on the part of nurse or parent may make of the child a life-long cripple, so a little neglect, even a thoughtless word or action, may cause a moral or spiritual deformity which may never be cured in this life, or even perhaps, in the life to come. The reason is, in the one case as in the other, that childhood and youth are the periods in which body and soul are plastic; as the years pass they harden, and never can wholly lose the impress they received at the beginning of life. It has been said that what is learned before the age of five is of greater importance than all that can be learned afterwards. Whether an age can be so precisely fixed or not may be doubtful; but it is at least certain that generally speaking the bent and character of adult life are determined in very great measure by the experiences of childhood. It is then that the ideas are assimilated and the habits of mind formed on which the child's whole outlook depends. Such ideas and habits make, as it were, the background on which all subsequently acquired knowledge is projected; they impart shape and color to all after-experience, and provide the terms in which it will be interpreted. In other words, it is the formation of the child's character that is the special province of parents; and this, it need hardly be said, is by far the most important part of the education it is the parents' duty to provide. For education, it must be remembered, is not the same thing as instruction, but is the "bringing out" of the latent powers of mind and body in their right proportions and due subordination to each other. Instruction is as a rule best delegated to those whose business it is to give it; but for the training of character the close and intimate contact, from the very beginning, of parents and children is of incomparably greater importance than any influence than can be exerted by the ablest of teachers. It is true that instruction is not without its

effect on character, and that some amount of instruction is inseparable from any kind of training. But instruction is addressed primarily, if not solely, to the understanding; whereas character is formed by countless influences, which affect body, mind, will and affections all at once or in turn, and act in all directions, but make their way by obscure channels into the "depths of personality" itself.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The proper object, then, of parental or home training is above and before everything the formation of character—to habituate the child to right ways of thinking, believing and acting, so that they may become like instincts, never to be forgotten and hard to disobey. Such training will be a spring and inspiration of conduct through life, and in every possible situation. But here arises the question of detail; and it is here that serious difficulties really begin. Children are not all alike; they differ not only in sex and age, but in natural disposition and ability; they are naturally inclined to different virtues and different faults—some are forward and some are shy, some are demonstrative and others self-restrained, some are precocious and others are backward—no two are precisely alike in any one respect. Then, too, parents differ as much as children, and in the same ways; a line of conduct that comes natural and easy to one parent is practically impossible for another; moreover, the way in which children are brought up must depend to a considerable extent on their parents' worldly position and circumstances; and these again vary endlessly. Is it possible to lay down any rule or principle that can be of general application to such a variety of conditions? Certainly no scheme can be framed which will provide for every detail of circumstances and idiosyncrasy. Nevertheless there are certain general rules which if rightly applied will solve all the difficulties to which special circumstances can give rise. The first is that children must be individually studied in regard to their moral qualities, as well as in regard to their physical ones. Every decent mother studies her children's health; she takes precautions against the development of particular weaknesses and predispositions to disease, and tries by all means to encourage the elements of

strength in their constitutions. The same individual care and forethought are needed for their moral health; indeed, since the subject is more complex and more obscure, even greater care and more constant study are required.

In the next place, it must be remembered that the object of training is to make men and women. Children will not be children all their lives; and to aim simply at making them model children is to neglect the true purpose of education altogether. It has often been remarked that model children seldom turn out well in after life. The reason is that they have been taught how to be good children, but not how to be good men and women. If training is to be efficient, it must be adapted to the gradual growth of the child to maturity; it must provide opportunities and incentives for initiative, for self-reliance and enterprise, for perseverance and self-restraint, for courage and resolution in the face of difficulty and failure; and these things are as a rule learned only by making mistakes and correcting them. Children must be helped to learn gradually, as their age advances, to stand alone morally as well as physically, to solve their own difficulties, to make rules of conduct for themselves. They are like plants that must be "hardened off" before they are set in open ground; if they have to go straight from the hot-house of home to the garden-bed of the world, they will in all probability wither and die in the keener air.

Thirdly, it need scarcely be said that religion must hold the chief place as an influence in moral training. Children should learn, as soon as they can learn anything, to regard prayer and the Sacraments as the channels of grace and blessing; and the familiar and untechnical instruction in the elements of religion, which parents are evidently better able to give than anyone else, is the foundation on which all later knowledge of whatever kind will be most securely based. A child that has learned to know and love God is already prepared, as otherwise he cannot be, to understand rightly the teaching of life; and the earlier this knowledge and love can be implanted in him, the more thoroughly will they be absorbed and assimilated, and the less danger will there be of their eradication by the temptations, intellectual and moral, which must sooner or later be encountered. Children have as a rule a

remarkable aptitude for religion, due no doubt to the absence of the corrupting influences of the world; and parents should take the earliest and fullest advantage possible of their receptivity in this respect. It is the greatest of all the privileges of parents that they have an opportunity which no one else has of leading their children at the earliest possible moment into the presence of God.

METHODS OF TRAINING

Lastly, a word must be said as to the methods to be adopted. These must of course vary indefinitely, according to the various temperaments and circumstances of children and parents. But there are some general considerations which should be carefully remembered. First, there must be authority; and consequently rules, which must be enforced if they are not to be worse than useless. Parental authority is of divine institution, and upon its recognition depends the recognition of all the other forms of authority which are more or less directly related to it. There is little prospect that an undutiful child will ever make a good Catholic or a good citizen. But, in the second place, parental authority must be evidently grounded on love. Home should not be like a school or an institution; it is not impersonal law that should create the atmosphere of home, but personal affection. Parents have, as a rule (though not invariably), a natural affection for their offspring which they share with the lower animals. But in Catholic parents there must be also the supernatural love which alone is proof against domestic worry and anxiety, and is alone able to devote itself unselfishly to the child's welfare. Again, example is at least as important as precept. Children are exceedingly observant, and quick to draw practical conclusions. It is utterly useless for parents to teach their children a religion that they themselves neglect to practice, or to exhort them to kindness and forbearance if they are witnesses of constant bickerings between father and mother. "It is quite time for you to go to bed," said a mother to a reluctant child, "all the little chickens are gone to bed." "Yes, mother," said the child, *"but the old hen has gone to bed too."* In few things is it more important to be scrupulously careful than in the matter of truthfulness. Children should never be told lies, even on those subjects about which

parents may feel unable to tell them the whole truth. An American mother once told her growing daughter that there was really no such person as Santa Klaus. "O mother," the child replied, "and is there no God either?" A child that can no longer believe its parents is like a ship that has lost its compass. Confidence is essential between parents and children; but it must not be forgotten that confidence *cannot* be forced, and is quite incompatible with *fear*. And in the difficult task that parents undertake God's help and direction are above all things needed, and must be specially sought by frequent and earnest prayer.

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUBJECT

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS

TEXT

He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them.—Luke ii. 51.

Analysis

Introduction. In the few words of our text St. Luke describes the private, hidden life of our Lord during His childhood and early manhood. During all these years, the Saviour, who was in reality the Creator and Lord of Mary and Joseph, was subject to them, as a child to his earthly parents, and obeyed all their words and wishes. Our Lord's conduct toward His foster father and Blessed Mother is the pattern according to which every good child should endeavor to model his life and actions with regard to his own parents.

I. What the fourth Commandment requires. 1. Children owe *honor* to their parents, and this implies three things: respect, obedience and support. We owe *respect* to our parents, because it is from them we have received our life; we owe them *obedience*, because it is from them we have received our training, education, etc.; we owe them assistance and *support*, if necessary, since they assisted us during our infancy and needful years. 2. Respect should be shown our parents in words and actions, in bearing their defects and failings, and by seeking their advice and direction in matters of importance. 3. Obedience is due to parents in all that is not sin, and that has not reference to a choice of a state of life. Our Lord remained in the Temple at the age of twelve without His parents' permission, because this pertained to His life

work, His divine mission on earth. While at Nazareth He obeyed them in all things. 4. In regard to support it is our duty to supply our parents with necessary food, clothing and other things, in as far as they have need, and to assist them spiritually in life and death. 5. We are under similar obligations of obedience and respect to other lawful authorities, such as, rulers, teachers, employers, etc. (Rom. xiii. 7).

II. Motives for observing this Commandment. 1. The duties imposed by this precept come first after our duties to God. 2. We owe our parents a debt of gratitude we can never pay. 3. Self-interest requires us to observe this precept. It is the only Commandment to the observance of which is expressly promised even a temporal reward (1 Tim. v. 4; Eph. vi. 2; Ecclus. iii. 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17). Failure to observe this Commandment brings with it misfortune and unhappiness in our own lives and families (Deut. xxvii. 16; Ecclus. iii. 18).

EXHORTATION. In order to deserve and receive the rewards of devoted children let us imitate such examples as those of the Patriarch Joseph (Gen. xlvi. 29), of King Solomon (3 Kings ii. 19), and above all of our Lord who was subject to Mary and Joseph.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.—EXOD. XX. 12.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECEDING AND THE FOLLOWING COMMANDMENTS

The preceding Commandments are supreme both in dignity and in importance; but those which follow rank next in order because of their necessity. For the first three tend directly to God; while the object of the remaining seven is the charity we owe to our neighbor, although even these are ultimately referred to God, since we love our neighbor on account of God. Hence our Lord

Himself has declared that the two Commandments which inculcate the love of God and of our neighbor are like unto each other.[1]

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

The advantages arising from a faithful observance of this Commandment can scarcely be expressed in words; for not only does it bring with it its own fruit, and that in the richest abundance and of superior excellence, but it also affords a test of the sincerity of our love for God: "He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth," says St. John, "how can he love God whom he seeth not?"[2] In like manner, if we do not honor and reverence our parents whom we see, how can we honor or reverence God, the supreme and best of parents, whom we see not? Hence we can easily perceive the similarity between these two Commandments.

The application of this Commandment is of very great extent. Besides our natural parents, there are many others whose power, rank, usefulness, exalted functions, or office, entitle them to parental honor.

Furthermore, this Commandment lightens the labor of parents and superiors; for their chief care is to mould the lives of those placed under their charge according to virtue and the maxims of the divine law; and the performance of this duty must be considerably facilitated, if it be known by all that highest honor to parents is an obligation, sanctioned and commanded by no less an authority than that of God Himself.

THE TWO TABLES OF THE LAW

To impress the mind with this truth, it will be found useful to distinguish the Commandments of the first from those of the second table. This distinction, therefore, the pastor will first explain.

Let him begin by showing that the divine precepts of the Decalogue were written on two tables, one of which, in the opinion of

[1] Matt. xii. 39. Mark xii. 31. See Aug., in Ps. xxxii. serm. 1; lib. 3 de doctrin. Christ. c. 10; lib. 50. hom. 38; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., quæst. 17. art. 8.

[2] 1 John iv. 20.

the holy Fathers, contained the three preceding, the other the remaining seven Commandments of the Decalogue.[3] This order of the Commandments is very appropriate, since their collocation points out their difference in nature. For whatever is commanded or prohibited in Scripture by the divine law springs from one of two principles, the love of God or of our neighbor: and one or the other of these is the basis of every duty required of us. The three preceding Commandments teach us the love which we owe to God, and the other seven, the duties which we owe to our neighbor and public society. The arrangement, therefore, which assigns some of the Commandments to the first and others to the second table, is not without good reason.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND TABLES

In the first three Commandments God, the supreme good, is, as it were, the subject matter; in the others, the good of our neighbor. The former require the highest love, the latter the love next to the highest. The former have to do with our last end, the latter with those things that lead us to our end.[4]

Again, the love of God terminates in God Himself, for God is to be loved above all things for His own sake; but the love of our neighbor originates in, and is to be regulated by, the love of God. If we love our parents, obey our masters, respect our superiors, our ruling principle in doing so should be that God is their Creator, and wishes to give pre-eminence to those by whose co-operation He governs and protects all others; and as He requires that we yield a dutiful respect to such persons, we should do so, because He deems them worthy of this honor. If, then, we honor our parents, the tribute is paid to God rather than to man. Accordingly we read in St. Matthew concerning duty to superiors: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me";[5] and the Apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians, giving instruction to ser-

[3] See Clem. of Alexan., lib. 6. Strom. well before the end; Aug., in Exod. q. 71; St. Thomas Ia. IIae., q. 100. art. 4.

[4] See Aug., in Ps. xxxii. serm. 1; St. Thomas, Ia. IIae., q. 122. arts. 1 & 2; opusc. 7. cap. de primo præcepto.

[5] Matt. x. 40.

vants, says: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ: not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ." [6]

Moreover, no honor, no piety, no devotion can be rendered to God sufficiently worthy of Him, since love of Him admits of infinite increase. Hence our charity should become every day more fervent towards Him, who commands us to love Him "with our whole heart, our whole soul, and with all our strength." [7] The love of our neighbor, on the contrary, has its limits, for we are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves.

To outstep these limits, by loving our neighbor as we love God, would be an enormous crime. "If any man come to me," says our Lord, "and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also; he cannot be my disciple." [8] In the same way, to one who would first attend the burial of his father, and then follow Christ, our Lord said: "Let the dead bury their dead"; [9] and the same lesson of instruction is more clearly conveyed in these words of St. Matthew's Gospel: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." [10]

Parents, no doubt, are to be affectionately loved and highly respected; but religion requires that supreme honor and homage be given to Him alone, who is the sovereign Creator, and universal Father, and that all our love for our earthly parents be referred to our eternal Father who is in heaven. Should, however, the injunctions of parents be at any time opposed to the Commandments of God, children are, of course, to prefer the will of God to the desires of their parents, always keeping in view the divine maxim: "We ought to obey God rather than men." [11]

[6] Ephes. vi. 5, 6. See Aug., lib. 3. de doct. Christ. c. 12; lib. 4. Conf., cc. 7, 10, 11, 12; Prosper., lib. 3. de vita contempl. c. 13; Bernard, de diligendo Deo.
[7] Deut. vi. 5. Luke x. 27. Matt. xxii. 37–39.
[8] Luke xiv. 26. [9] Luke ix. 60. [10] Matt. x. 37.
[11] Acts v. 29.

EXPLANATION OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT—MEANING OF THE WORD "HONOR"

After these preliminary remarks the pastor will proceed to explain the words of the Commandment, beginning with "honor." To "honor" is to think respectfully of anyone, and, in every relation in which he may be considered, to hold him in the highest estimation. It includes love, respect, obedience, and reverence. Very properly, then, is the word "honor" used here in preference to the word "fear" or "love," although parents are also to be much loved and feared. Respect and reverence are not always the accompaniments of love; neither is love the inseparable companion of fear; but honor, when proceeding from the heart, combines both fear and love.

MEANING OF THE WORD "FATHER"

The pastor will next explain who they are, whom the Commandment designates as fathers; for although the law refers primarily to our natural fathers, yet the name belongs to others also, and these seem to be indicated in the Commandment, as we can gather from numerous passages of Scripture. Besides our natural fathers, then, there are others who in Scripture are called fathers, as was said above, and to each of these proper honor is due.

In the first place, the prelates of the Church, her pastors and priests are called fathers, after the example of the Apostle, who, writing to the Corinthians, says: "I write not these things to confound you; but I admonish you as my dearest children. For if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus by the Gospel I have begotten you."[12] We also read in Ecclesiasticus: "Let us praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation."[13]

Those who govern the State, to whom are intrusted power, magistracy, or command, are also called fathers; thus Naaman was called father by his servants.[14]

The name father is also applied to those to whose care, fidelity,

[12] 1 Cor. iv. 14–16. [13] Eccl. xliv. 1. [14] 4 Kings v. 13.

probity and wisdom, others are committed, such as teachers, instructors, masters, and guardians; and hence the sons of the prophets called Elias [15] and Eliseus [16] their fathers. Finally, aged men, whose years entitle them to our respect, we also call fathers.

WHY PARENTS SHOULD BE HONORED

In his instructions the pastor should chiefly emphasize the obligation of honoring all who are entitled to be called fathers, especially our natural fathers, of whom the divine Commandment particularly speaks. They are, so to say, images of the immortal God. In them we behold a picture of our own origin; from them we have received existence, them God made use of to impart to us the soul with all its faculties, by them we were led to the Sacraments, instructed in our religion, schooled in right conduct, and trained in civil and human knowledge.[17]

MOTHERS TO BE LOVED AND HONORED

The pastor will teach that the name of "mother" is also mentioned in this Commandment, and with good reason, in order to remind us of the benefits which we have received from her; of the care and solicitude with which she bore us, and of the pain and labor with which she gave us birth and brought us up.

MANNER OF HONORING PARENTS

Moreover, the honor which children are commanded to pay to their parents should be the spontaneous offering of sincere and dutiful love. This is nothing more than their due, since for the love of us, they decline no labor, spare no exertion, shrink from no danger. Their highest pleasure it is to feel that they are loved by their children, the dearest objects of their affection. Joseph, when he enjoyed in Egypt the highest station and the most ample power after the King himself, received with honor his father, who had come into Egypt.[18] Solomon rose to meet his

[15] 4 Kings ii. 12.
[16] 4 Kings xiii. 14.
[17] On the duties of children to parents see Anton., Aug., lib. 10. tit. 19.
[18] Gen. xlvi.

mother as she approached; and having paid her the tribute of filial respect, placed her on a royal throne on his right hand.[19]

We also owe to our parents other duties of respect, such as to supplicate God in their behalf, that they may lead prosperous and happy lives, beloved and esteemed by all who know them, and most pleasing in the sight of God and of His saints.

We also honor them by submission to their wishes and inclinations. "My son," says Solomon, "hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; that grace may be added to thy head and a chain of gold to thy neck." [20] Of the same kind are the exhortations of St. Paul. "Children," he says, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just"; [21] and also, "children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord." [22] This doctrine is confirmed by the example of the holiest men. Isaac, when bound for sacrifice by his father, meekly and uncomplainingly obeyed; [23] and the Rechabites, not to depart from the counsel of their father, always abstained from wine.[24]

We also honor our parents by the imitation of their good example; for, to study the life of another as a model for imitation, is the highest mark of esteem. We also honor them when we not only ask but follow their advice.

Again we honor our parents when we relieve their necessities, supplying them with necessary food and clothing according to these words of the Redeemer, who, when reproving the impiety of the Pharisees, said: "Why do you also transgress the commandments of God because of your traditions? For God said: 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' and, 'he that shall curse father or mother let him die the death.' But you say: Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, the gift whatsoever proceedeth from me, shall profit thee. And he shall not honor his father or his mother; and you have made void the commandment of God for your tradition." [25]

But if at all times it is our duty to honor our parents, this duty

[19] 3 Kings ii. 19. [20] Proverbs i. 8, 9. [21] Ephes. vi. 1.
[22] Col. iii. 20. [23] Gen. xxii. 9. [24] Jerem. xxxv. 6.
[25] Matt. xv. 3-6. On the duty of assisting parents see Basil., hom. de honore parentum; in Hexam. hom. 9; Amb., lib. 5. Hexam. c. 16; C. of Gangr., can. 6; dist. 86, in many places; Jerome, lib. 2. Commentar. in Matt.; Aug., lib. 1. quæst. Evang. cap. 14.

becomes still more imperative when they are visited by severe illness. We should then pay particular attention to what regards their eternal salvation, taking especial care that they duly receive the last Sacraments. We should also see that pious and religious persons visit them frequently to strengthen their weakness, assist them by their counsel, and animate them to the hope of immortality, that having risen above the concerns of this world, they may fix their thoughts and affections entirely on God. Thus blessed with the sublime virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and fortified by the Sacraments of the Church, they will not only look at death without fear, but will hail it as the bright opening to a blessed eternity.

Finally, we honor our parents even after their death by attending their funerals, procuring them suitable burial, having Masses said for the repose of their souls, and faithfully executing their last wills.

REWARD PROMISED TO THE OBSERVANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT

Having explained these matters, the pastor will next consider the nature of the reward promised to the observance of this Commandment, and its appropriateness in relation to filial piety. That reward is great, indeed, for it consists principally in length of days. They who always preserve the grateful remembrance of a benefit deserve to be blessed with its prolonged enjoyment. Children, therefore, who honor their parents, and gratefully acknowledge the blessing of life received from them are deservedly rewarded with the protracted enjoyment of that life to an advanced age.

The nature of the divine promise also demands clear explanation. It includes not only the eternal life of the blessed, but also the life which we lead on earth, according to these words of the Apostle: "Piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." [26]

Many very holy men, it is true, such as Job,[27] David,[28] Paul,[29] desired to die, and a long life is burdensome to the wretched; [30]

[26] 1 Tim. iv. 8. [27] Job iii. [28] Ps. cxix. 5.
[29] Phil. ii. 17. [30] 2 Cor. v. 2.

but the reward which is here promised is, notwithstanding, neither inconsiderable, nor to be despised. The additional words, "which the Lord thy God will give thee," promise not only length of days, but also repose, tranquillity, security, which render life happy; for in Deuteronomy it is not only said, "that thou mayest live a long time," but it is also added, "and that it may be well with thee," [31] words afterwards quoted by the Apostle.[32]

WHY THIS REWARD IS NOT ALWAYS CONFERRED ON DUTIFUL CHILDREN

These blessings, we say, are conferred on those whose piety God rewards; otherwise the divine promises would not be fulfilled, since the more dutiful child is sometimes the more short-lived.

Now this happens sometimes because his interests are best consulted in summoning him from this world before he has strayed from the path of virtue and of duty, according to these words of the Wise man: "He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul.[33] Or because destruction and general upheaval are impending, he is called away that he may escape the calamities of the times. "The just man," says the Prophet, "is taken away from before the face of evil," [34] lest his virtue and salvation be endangered. Or else, he is spared the bitter anguish of witnessing the calamities of his friends and relations in such evil days. The premature death of the good therefore, gives just reason to apprehend the approach of calamitous times.

PUNISHMENT FOR VIOLATION OF THIS COMMANDMENT

But, if Almighty God promises rewards to dutiful children, He also reserves the heaviest chastisements to punish those who are wanting in filial piety; for it is written: "He that curseth his father or mother shall die the death": [35] "he that afflicteth his father and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy": [36]

[31] Deut. v. 16.
[32] Eph. vi. 3.
[33] Wisd. iv. 10, 11.
[34] Isa. lvii. 1.
[35] Exod. xxi. 17. Lev. xx. 9.
[36] Prov. xix. 26.

"he that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness";[37] "the eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth the labor of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it."[38] There are on record many instances of undutiful children, who were made the signal objects of the divine vengeance. The disobedience of Absalom to his father David did not go unpunished. On account of his sin he perished miserably, transfixed by three lances.[39]

Of those who resist the spiritual authority of the priest it is written: "He that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest who ministereth at that time to the Lord thy God, by the decree of the judge that man shall die."[40]

Sermons

Obedience

BY THE REV. P. A. SHEEHAN

He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them.

INTRODUCTION

We are making rapid progress, my brethren, in our commemoration of the life of our Divine Lord. It is only a fortnight since we saw Him laid the new-born Babe in the manger at Bethlehem: a week ago and He was taken to the temple to be circumcised; scarcely three days have elapsed since we have seen kings around Him, still an infant, but already acknowledged as God of the universe and King of Men, and in to-day's Gospel that striking episode is put before us for our consideration, which pictures our Divine Redeemer in the midst of the doctors of Jerusalem, no longer an infant, apparently helpless, but a child endowed with wisdom more than human, putting to shame the gray-haired wisdom of Jerusalem, hearing them, as they tried to interpret the words of the Holy Spirit, asking them questions, as He afterwards

[37] Prov. xx. 20. [38] Prov. xxx. 17. [39] Kings xviii. 14.
[40] Deut. xvii. 12. See Clem. epist. 3. after the beginning; ep. 1. after the beginning; Ambr., lib. 1. 2. offic. c. 24; Jerome, epist. 1. after the middle; II. q. 3. 1. 11 13.

asked them in the streets of Jerusalem, leaving His enemies dumb, and answering them, so that, as the Gospel says, "They wondered much upon seeing Him." It is a rapid stride we have made compressing twelve years of our Lord's life into three days: and it is a sudden change, instantaneous as all the movements of God seem to be, from child unseen, hidden in His Mother's arms in Bethlehem, and yet throwing Jerusalem into a panic, to the same child carrying consternation among the doctors by the words of heavenly wisdom which He spoke. It is not on this event, my brethren, we would dwell to-day, but upon that remarkable sentence which closes the Gospel, and which is a complete history of the greater part of our Lord's life—His hidden life at Nazareth, the twelve years that preceded the events of this day's Gospel—the eighteen years that succeeded until Christ commenced His public ministry: "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them."

OBEDIENCE BASED ON HUMILITY

We have seen what was the humiliation of our Divine Lord in His birth; and it is easy to trace that humiliation through the whole course of His life. And it is not extravagant to say the humiliation of our Divine Lord did not cease on Calvary; that the eternal union with His Sacred Humanity will always, in a certain sense, be a source of humiliation as well as a source of infinite honor to Him. So, too, until the end of time He will continue that greatest of all humiliations, His Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, a humiliation, like the humiliation of His birth, self-inflicted, but the source too of many irreverences and humiliations, inflicted, like the sufferings of Calvary, by the hands of His sinful creatures.

One of the many ways in which He exercised that humility was by the practice of a virtue that is very closely allied to humility, and that rests upon humility as its foundation—I mean the virtue of obedience. He practiced that virtue in Heaven: "Holocausts and oblations thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou fitted for me; then, said I, behold I come: in the head of the book it was written of me that I should do Thy will, O my God." He practiced that virtue upon earth;

for every act was conformable to the will of His Heavenly Father: "I came not to do my own will; but the will of him who sent me." "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." And every act of His life was done in obedience to others, except where the will of His Father demanded a prior obedience. Even His birth was an act of obedience. It was obedience to the decree of Cæsar that brought His mother to Bethlehem, and He was born to be enrolled at the instant of His birth as the subject of a temporal prince.

His circumcision in the Temple was an act of obedience to the Jewish ceremonial law. What was the obedience of His life we may learn from that one sentence of the Evangelist: "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them." And during His Passion He had no will of His own, being perfectly resigned to the will of His Father, and submissive alternately to the brutal soldiers that arrested Him, and the judge who condemned Him unjustly. Even still Christ is obedient—obedient to the voice of the priest in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Five words from His sinful creature, and He runs through a series of miracles, each as wonderful as the greatest miracle He wrought on earth, and repeats a greater mystery than the Incarnation, compelled thereto by the joint action of His love for men, and His obedience to the power with which He vested His ministers, and the law of love which He established.

From the example of our Divine Lord we shall learn at once what is the nature of obedience: it is simply the sacrifice of our will. Faith demands the sacrifice of our intellects; it demands that one should acknowledge as true that which we do not understand; it demands that one should admit that human reason is imperfect and finite in its operations, and it compels our assent to truths of an order to which reason is a stranger. Obedience demands that we sacrifice our wills; that we consent to yield ourselves up to the discretion of others; to acknowledge the right in others to determine what we shall do or omit; and therefore, reduced from theory to practice, it is the prompt and cheerful execution of the commandments of those whose right to rule we acknowledge. Obedience is

therefore the practice of humility, and it affords the readiest proof that we are really humble. For humility is an act of the intellect enlightened by God whereby we understand our nothingness in the eyes of God, and our inferiority to our fellow-creatures. Obedience is the effect of that humility, forcing the soul to submit blindly to the will of God and to the will of our superiors by whom the will of God is manifested.

OBEDIENCE BASED ON MORTIFICATION

Again obedience is based upon mortification. It is the clearest sign of a spirit truly mortified. There are many in the world gifted by nature with iron wills, that crush down all obstacles, that can bear austerities without murmuring, that can tame their flesh and subdue every rebellion within them, by fasting and haircloth and the discipline, and yet be by no means mortified, because that iron will cannot subdue itself, nor can it subdue the pride which the consciousness of the possession of such a will originates.

And so it has been to the world many times a matter of surprise and a subject of scandal that men, apparently to all outer seeming, austere, mortified, self-annihilated, could have been so abandoned by God as to lose the faith, and to labor to bring many others with them to perdition. They went about with pale, emaciated faces—body and soul barely kept together—mere shadows that a breath would dissolve, and men called them saints; yet they were castaways, abandoned by God, which was clearly proven when their sanctity was put to the test, for when the Church demanded their obedience, and God demanded the sacrifice of their wills, they refused that obedience and that sacrifice, without which, in the eyes of God, the austerities of a Simon Stylites were utterly unavailing. So it was with Blaise Pascal in the last century; and Protestants, when they repeat his calumnies against the Church and the religious Orders, point to his sunken face and his mortified ascetic appearance, and they ask us do we not find in these sufficient motives of credibility? No! because it was not austerity, but vinegar that made him pale and thin; the gall of bitterness of wounded pride and quick susceptibilities, that

were made doubly sensitive by being pampered. If a single act of his life would bear comparison with this: "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them," we might lend him an ear, but all the externals of sanctity do not prove to us his vocation from God, if not sealed with the seal of obedience. Therefore it is that St. Augustine says that obedience is the greatest virtue; the origin, the mother of all virtues.

"Obedience," says St. Gregory, "is the only virtue which implants the other virtues in the mind, and preserves them when they are implanted. Obedience is better than sacrifice: because by sacrifice the flesh of another is immolated, by obedience our own will is sacrificed to Almighty God."

MOTIVES FOR OBEDIENCE

There are two other motives for obedience besides those already mentioned, and they are the reverence which we owe to those we are bound to obey, and acknowledge the utility of obedience and its necessity for the preservation of any kind of society. There is first the reverence which we owe to those we are bound to obey, and without this reverence our obedience will be imperfect. It will be wanting in its principal motive. Our obedience may be meritorious, but it will not be obedience properly so-called. It may be some other virtue, or it may be only a servile fear. If I obey the commandments of God through fear of the punishments He inflicts on those who disobey, we may call that virtue, if it be called a virtue, compliance, or prudence, or by any other name, but it is not obedience.

For obedience supposes that I yield up my own will, because He whom I obey wishes it. It therefore supposes as a motive reverence and affection. So, too, when a child obeys its parents, it is but little gratification to know that it is through fear of chastisement, very little gratification, indeed, to feel that your house is changed into a prison, that the law of sternness and just judgments has superseded the law of filial reverence and affection. Yet there are many, even here to-day, with whom even sternness and judgment are a thing of the past, who have no longer any power over their children. They

never had the power that springs from love and affection, because by the bad example of their lives they sowed the seeds of neglect and irreligion, and these could bring forth no other fruit than disrespect and contempt. Oh! there are few houses in the world to-day like that house of Nazareth—very few houses that reproduce even faintly the holiness and the peace and the serene happiness that dwelt with that Family on earth, Joseph and Mary and Jesus. Where shall you find nowadays the perfect obedience that the Infant God: aye, and the Man-God, too, paid to His Mother and foster Father? Obedience springs from humility and self-denial, and deep reverence, that God Himself was proud to pay to those highly gifted creatures that He had chosen for Himself. For, mark you, I don't say humility or self-denial alone, as if our Divine Lord did say: "These are my creatures, and now to humble myself I will obey them," but have added reverence, too, and this was His primary motive, that He saw the dignity to which the Father had raised her, saw the beauty with which the Spirit had clothed her, and saw that she was His Mother, who loved Him tenderly, and for whom every pulse of His Heart gave assurance of affection, and therefore it was no device of His humility to obey her, but the action of His intelligence that saw her worth, and the promptness of His Heart that appreciated it. His was obedience that knew no fear; His an affection that never degenerated into disrespectful familiarity; neither was His an eye-serving obedience, that reverenced the Mother before her face, and made light of the Mother when away from her presence, but her memory, her image in His mind was as sacred to Him, and as hallowed as her presence. Oh! there are very few households in our days like that of Nazareth, very few children like the boy Jesus, and I suppose the reason is, that there are very few fathers like Joseph, and very few mothers like Mary.

Lastly, there is the utility of obedience as the surest way to secure salvation; and there is the necessity of obedience, without which, as a strong ligament to bind together any society, the elements of union become elements of discord. Its utility —for the saints tell us it is the shortest way to perfection.

"It is the holocaust which leaves nothing unconsecrated to God." Poverty consecrates our wealth to God, temperance consecrates our flesh, obedience consecrates everything we possess to God, leaving us nothing which we can call our own, not even our wills. And therefore St. Anselm compares a good secular, be he priest or layman, to one who offers to God all the fruits of the tree of His life, but a religious, under vow of obedience, to one who gives to God not only the fruits of the tree, but the tree itself.

It is needless to dwell on the necessity of obedience. It is evident that if harmony be the law of creation, so must obedience, without which there is neither order nor harmony. There is not a single creature on earth that does not move in obedience to certain laws; neither can any society maintain itself, whether it be the vast society of the Catholic Church, or the society of the smallest household, in which superiority is not recognized and deference paid to the superior. Therefore it is that all religious societies outside the Catholic Church are disintegrated and disorganized because the principle of their origin was disobedience, and they carry that principle with them in their rebellion.

But we know that the yoke of Jesus Christ is sweet and His burden light, and we have our answer to all that may be advanced about human liberty and the like, and that answer is the life of Jesus Christ, whose followers we profess to be. And just as when they object to our reverence for his Blessed Mother we point to Bethlehem and Nazareth and Calvary; and when they object to our practice of mortification, we point to every incident of His life; so when they object to our obedience as unmanly and servile, we point to this of the Evangelist, amongst many other sentences: "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them."

EXHORTATION

It is unnecessary, my brethren, to recommmend such obedience to you. The Church of God is a kind Mother and not a harsh mistress. Yet there are some among us children of the Church who are not its children, but its galley-slaves. They

pay the Church no obedience, they will not obey its precepts; they will not frequent the Sacraments, and if they come to Mass, God alone knows what motive brings them hither. They will not sever their connection with the Church, because they know it would cost them their souls; at the last moments they will demand the Sacraments as a rightful inheritance; but they will find a stern judge in Him who was a model of obedience here on earth. Do you, my brethren, carry with you into your families that spirit of obedience with which God has inspired you to regard His Church? Recognize the fact that we are mutually dependent upon one another, that we lean upon one another, and all upon God; that therefore we are bound to yield our wills to the wills of our superiors and even to those whose are inferior to us. So, children, learn to love your parents and to obey them because you love them, as Jesus obeyed His Mother because He loved her. Husbands and wives, learn to be mutually forbearing, and teach your children to obey you because they respect you, and therefore beware of ever once giving them bad example; for the minds of children are very quick, and if the mind of your child once revolts from you, your relationship is severed. You may continue to be his warder or keeper—you are no longer his father or mother. Masters, respect your servants, and do no violence to their feelings, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. And servants, obey your masters with respect and fear, and in the simplicity of your hearts, as you would obey Christ. Whatever you do, labor as if for the Lord, and not for men, knowing that it is from God you will receive your reward.

Obedience

BY THE REV. F. PEPPERT

Jesus was subject to them.—Luke ii. 51.

our lord's example

Pride lies at the root of human misery, for it misleads men to their own disadvantage, and makes them set themselves up against God and their fellow men. Pride refuses to submit to

any authority and leads only to destruction. Our Lord by His twofold obedience sets us a great example of humility, the virtue opposed to pride. He showed obedience to God by conforming to the Divine precept requiring Him to go to Jerusalem. But in order to show that obedience to human authority is always connected with obedience to God, He obeyed His holy Mother Mary and his foster-father, St. Joseph, and was subject to them. It is wonderful to think that the Son of God humbled Himself so far as to obey weak human beings. Nothing is better calculated to conquer the recklessness and pride that incline us to disobey those in authority over us, than the thought of the Child Jesus, listening to His parents' words in the little house at Nazareth, ready to do whatever they bid Him and eager to carry out their wishes precisely and without delay. He teaches us most emphatically to be obedient to our superiors; obedience directed all His actions throughout His life. Just as when a child He obeyed His parents, so later on He obeyed the rulers of the State, for instance by paying tribute. By His example He taught us patience even in the greatest sufferings, as He allowed Himself to be taken prisoner by the servants of those in authority, rebuked Peter for drawing his sword and healed the man's ear that had been cut off. "Be obedient to your superiors" is the lesson taught by the holy Child at twelve years of age—be attentive to His words; for disobedience is a wrong not only to your superiors, but also to Him, since it is His will that you should obey them. To all superiors applies the commandment: "Thou shalt do whatsoever they shall say, that preside in the place which the Lord shall choose, and what they shall teach according to his law, and thou shalt follow their sentence, neither shalt thou decline to the right hand nor to the left hand" (Deut. xvii. 10, 11).

NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE

St. Peter tells us to "be subject to every human creature for God's sake," *i.e.*, although your superiors are only human beings like yourselves, the power that they have over you is from God. They are given you by Him, to order you, in His place, to do what is expedient for the whole community; hence you

must be subject to them as His representatives. We see from these passages that obedience to superiors is a necessary consequence of obedience to God. It would be useless to imagine that you were pious and good servants of God if you did not try to pay the obedience due to your superiors, because God has set them over you.

Why does God require us to be obedient? Because without obedience every individual would be ruined and the whole of human society be thrown into confusion. Disobedience involves ruin for the individual. A child cannot understand what is good for him; he knows very little about the world, himself or Almighty God. He regards as good many things that would be injurious to him, and the corruption of our human nature makes him think most unpleasant what is most beneficial. Supposing a child were always to do only what he chose, and were not forced to follow the right course by the affectionate, but if necessary stern compulsion of his superiors, what would be the result? He would be ruined both in body and in soul. But it is a mark of God's love that He sets people over the child, who by their care and authority can supply what he still lacks in the way of experience and training. Gratitude for such care ought to make children eager to obey, and where there is no obedience, there is only sinful ingratitude.

Not only children but grown-up persons also need guidance. Although a man may be able to form a correct opinion of himself and of the various circumstances of life, he may still not be able to consider all circumstances exactly, or to see everything in its true light; he may make mistakes and require some higher authority to keep him back from dangerous and harmful paths. Moreover, there are many passions apt to lead astray even intelligent and highly educated people. What a benefit it is for such if they are subject to the authority of others, who can regard matters impartially, and how advantageous it is for them if they do not cast good advice to the winds, but follow it! By doing so they are acting for their own welfare.

QUALITIES OF OBEDIENCE

It follows from Holy Scripture that we ought to obey our superiors even if we do not know why they order us to do this or that, and do not see that the thing ordered is expedient for us.

True obedience consists in doing a thing simply because it is ordered. A man who obeys an order, merely because he sees that the thing ordered is advantageous to him, is obeying not so much his superior as his own understanding. Hence it is no excuse for disobedience if anyone says: "I shall not do as I am told, because I do not see the good of it." A remark of this kind proves that he knows nothing of the principles underlying Christian obedience. The temptation to disobedience is still greater when pride in our own hearts and wills makes us fancy that we know the reasons why a certain command is laid upon us, but regard them as trivial, and, as we understand the matter better than our superior, we need not obey him. What obedience would there ever be if every subordinate had first to criticize the reasons why he was ordered to do anything, and then decide whether they seemed satisfactory or not, thinking that he was bound to obey only if the reasons agreed with his own views. He would certainly discover that the reasons for doing anything disagreeable were insufficient, and only what was pleasant would appear obligatory, and thus his own will would take the place of obedience.

Suppose that every member of a large community or family, every person in a town or country, before obeying, had to decide whether the reasons for the command were clear and agreeable to him—what would happen? One would refuse to obey, another would obey only partially, and complete confusion would result, families, towns and countries would be ruined.

CONCLUSION

Obedience is the bond uniting human beings, and without it men must perish. Hence Church and State alike require us to obey. If you intend to be faithful members of the Church and

good citizens—in other words, if you mean to be genuine Christians, you must early accustom yourselves to obedience, not what is often called obedience nowadays, which is just doing what is pleasant, but real obedience paid to a superior regardless of your own opinions, simply because it is God's will that obedience be paid to superiors as His representatives. If you do not now accustom yourselves to obey them, you will never obey God Himself. Can we ever perceive what He has in view in the manifold circumstances of our life on earth? Are we not so shortsighted as often to be mistaken with regard to what God in His wisdom requires of us? Is not the life of a Christian an incessant submission to God in faith? Yes, unless we obey Him we shall never reach heaven, which our forefathers lost by their disobedience. You will never obey God properly unless you learn betimes to submit to those in authority over you, who speak to you in His name. He who, when young, criticizes the orders of his superiors, and rejects all that do not please him, will afterwards treat God's commandments in the same way. Experience shows us that atheists and unbelievers always begin by disobeying their parents and elders. Therefore, if you truly love God, and wish to be faithful to Him throughout your lives, regard obedience as a most sacred duty. Keep Jesus always before your eyes, and whenever a temptation to disobedience arises in your hearts, let the Divine Child look at you with love and say: "My child, I, too, was subject to Mary, My mother, and to My holy foster father." Amen.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUBJECT

THE DUTIES OF MARRIED PEOPLE

TEXT

Let love be without dissimulation, hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. . . . Being of one mind, one toward another.—Rom. xii. 9, 16.

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage.—John ii. 1, 2.

Analysis

Introduction. Cana was a small village about one hour's walk from Nazareth, the home of the Blessed Virgin. The couple united in wedlock at this marriage were perhaps relatives of our Lady, and this may account, at least in part, for her presence there, and that of our Lord and the Apostles. We can easily picture to ourselves the dignity and loveliness which must have graced this occasion. What virtue and modesty must have characterized that wedding company! Surely the blessings of that day, and the faithful promises then made in the presence of our Lord Himself, must have endured throughout the lives of that bridal pair, making their home the abode of happiness and a model of domestic piety. Married people to-day, if they would be happy and peaceful, must imitate the spirit of this feast of Cana, starting with the blessing of Christ upon them, and living their lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ's Church.

I. Mutual duties of husband and wife. 1. The husband and wife owe each other love, since marriage is principally a union of heart and affection. The qualities of this love are: (a) it must be *genuine, i.e.,* expressed not merely in word, but in deed; (b) it must be *constant, i.e.,* it must not be diminished by time or circumstances, since they take each other for better or for worse, for

richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, etc.; (c) it must be *supernatural* and *spiritual, i.e.*, it must have the eternal salvation of both parties as its purpose, and must permit of nothing that would be a hindrance to their sanctification. 2. The husband and wife must be faithful in their love and devotion to each other, and must avoid everything that can cause reasonable suspicion or jealousy. This duty obliges one as much as the other (1 Cor. vii. 4). 3. The husband and wife should never forget that the primary object of marriage is to have children. 4. The married couple should live together in peace and harmony, for every house divided against itself must fall (Luke xi. 17).

II. Duties of the husband. 1. The husband should love his wife as a partner (Coloss. iii. 18), and remember that he holds in her regard the place of a father and a brother. 2. The husband should honor his wife, trusting her, treating her as a helpmate and not a slave (1 Peter iii. 7). 3. The husband must provide for the decent support and protection of his wife and family, according to their state. 4. The husband must bear with the defects of his wife and charitably correct her when necessary. 5. The husband, by word and example, is bound to promote the moral and spiritual welfare of his wife and family.

III. Duties of the wife. 1. St. Paul reduces the wife's duties to three, which are to take care of the house, and to be gentle and obedient to her husband (Titus ii. 5). 2. The primary duty of the wife is to obey her husband in all that is reasonable and not contrary to the law of God (Gen. iii. 16; Eph. v. 22). 3. The wife should, by her diligence and cleanliness, by her cheerfulness and amiability, strive to make her husband happy at home and in her company; she should find her pleasure in her home and not in going about. 4. By her prudent and economical management the wife should endeavor to make the best use of her husband's earnings. 5. It is the wife's duty to train the children in piety and religion.

Conclusion. 1. Married people should remember that their personal sanctification and the happiness of their family depends

on the faithful discharge of the respective duties of husband and wife. 2. These duties cannot be discharged (a) unless the parties try to overcome, or hold in check, their own faults and failings, while exercising forbearance toward each other; (b) unless their love for each other be supernatural and spiritual rather than sensual. 3. The better to fulfill their duties married people should be devoted to prayer and go regularly to the Sacraments.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

The Duties of Married People

The more easily to preserve the holy state of marriage from dissensions, the pastor will instruct the faithful in the duties of husband and wife, as inculcated by St. Paul and by the prince of the Apostles.[1]

DUTIES OF A HUSBAND

It is the duty of the husband to treat his wife generously and honorably. It should not be forgotten that Eve was called by Adam "his companion." "The woman," he says, "whom thou gavest me as a companion." Hence, it was, according to the opinion of some of the holy Fathers, that she was formed not from the feet but from the side of man; as, on the other hand, she was not formed from his head, in order to give her to understand that it was not hers to command but to obey her husband.

The husband should also be constantly occupied in some honest pursuit, with a view to provide necessaries for the support of his family and to avoid idleness, the root of almost every vice.

He is also to keep all his family in order, to correct their morals, and see that they discharge their duties with fidelity.

DUTIES OF A WIFE

On the other hand, the duties of a wife are thus summed up by the prince of the Apostles: "Let wives be subject to their husbands: that if any believe not the word, they may be won

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 1-6. See also Aug., lib. 1. de adult. conjug. cc. 21, 22; de bono conjug. car. 7; de Nupt. et concupis. lib. 1. c. 10.

without the word by the conversation of the wives, considering your chaste conversation with fear. Let not their adorning be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel: but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Peter iii. 1-6).

To train up their children in the practice of virtue, and to pay particular attention to their domestic concerns, should also be especial objects of their attention. The wife should love her home and should not spend her time elsewhere, unless duty requires this and she has her husband's consent.

Again, and in this the conjugal union chiefly consists, let wives never forget that next to God they are to love their husbands, to esteem them above all others, yielding to them in all things not inconsistent with Christian piety, a willing obedience.

Sermons

Christian and Pagan Views of Marriage

BY THE REV. K. KROGH-TONNING, D.D.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage.—John ii. 1, 2.

INTRODUCTION

Matrimony, more perhaps than any other ordinary state of life, offers abundant opportunities to faith of developing and of bringing forth fruit, and it is most important that this should be accomplished, for where marriage is respected, society prospers; and where marriage is dishonored, all social prosperity is undermined, for marriage is the foundation of social life. In the Gospel we read that our Lord was present at a wedding, and He intended thus to sanctify the marriage bond. Nevertheless there are unsanctified marriages even among Christians, and we sometimes meet with pagan ideas on the subject.

I. PAGAN IDEAS OF MARRIAGE: POLYGAMY

It behooves us clearly to distinguish between these pagan views and those which Christians ought to hold, and therefore we will proceed to compare them.

Paganism regards woman as a slave, and this is the result of failure to appreciate every human being as a distinct, living personality. When personality is overlooked, a slave ceases to be an intelligent being, and becomes merely a thing, or at best a domestic animal. Where woman is regarded as the slave of her husband, polygamy results, for he may have several slaves and consequently several wives. The number of his wives and slaves is as unimportant as the number of his domestic animals and of the utensils employed in his business. A further result of this theory is that marriage ceases to be permanent. A worn-out utensil is thrown away, a worthless slave is got rid of in one way or another, and so is an animal which is no longer required. If the wife is nothing but a chattel belonging to the husband, he can keep her or dispose of her as he chooses.

DOMESTIC SLAVERY

Someone may feel inclined to exclaim that all this has nothing to do with us; no wife is now her husband's slave. Of course she is not *legally*, but is she not sometimes *practically* a slave? Do not men allow their wives to toil in order to support the family? Do none amongst us heap upon women cares and burdens such as the men alone are qualified to bear? Men are very apt to relieve themselves of their troubles; and women are by nature inclined to take anxieties upon themselves.

At the wedding feast in Cana a difficulty presented itself—the wine ran short, and our Lady became aware of the fact. She, being a woman, sympathized at once with the embarassment felt by the host, and was impelled to do her best to remove it. She revealed a truly feminine trait, one that God's hand seems to have impressed upon woman at her creation, but the more a man may admire it, the more careful should he

be not to abuse his wife's emotional and sympathetic disposition by casting upon her burdens that she is unfit to bear.

DIVORCE

We have already referred to the dissolubility of marriage among pagans. Unhappily there is great need nowadays to protest against the revival of this pagan theory. It ought not to be necessary for me to remind you of all the misery to society and to individuals that results from facilities for divorce. It is quite certain that, where the State is ready to declare marriages annulled, they are contracted recklessly. People are careless enough where the outward bond is inviolable, but when it is weakened, separation becomes a matter of everyday occurrence. Need I dwell upon the unhappy position of those who have separated? Need I point out what terrible consequences would ensue if still more children were to grow up without the discipline and ties of family life? History records plainly enough the disastrous results of weakening the marriage bond, but, as the saying goes, history teaches us that men refuse to learn from history.

2. THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING OF MARRIAGE—INDISSOLUBILITY

In the Catholic Church we are taught: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." But the world says: "What men have united, they may separate again." The Church regards marriage as a Sacrament instituted by God; the world looks upon it as a purely civil contract. The former is the Christian, the latter the pagan view of matrimony. The Church can never sanction the dissolution of a lawful marriage, so as to leave either party free to marry again. Separation is possible, when for some special reasons husband and wife cannot live together; but separation is not divorce, and neither party can marry again during the lifetime of the other.

DIGNITY OF WOMAN

Amongst Christians a wife is not a slave, and one of the greatest benefits conferred by the Church upon mankind is

that she has raised woman from her former position of degradation. Christianity teaches that the whole female sex was degraded by the sin of Eve, but it teaches also that the whole sex was raised and ennobled in the person of Mary, the Mother of our Lord and Saviour; she was full of grace, blessed among women, and all generations shall call her blessed.

DUTIES OF HUSBANDS

Man knows that his wife is "flesh of his flesh," and "bone of his bone," and St. Peter bids him give her honor. He is the head and master of the family, but, if he be a Christian, he will not ruthlessly assert his supremacy. It is his business to provide for the support of wife and children, but he will not despise his wife's advice and disregard her wishes. He knows that husband and wife alike have mutual rights and duties; she, no less than himself, is an intelligent being, and, in the eyes of a Christian husband, her personality is sacred because God desires her salvation equally with his own. Both are sinners, in need of God's grace; for both did Jesus Christ come into the world, that with His precious Blood He might deliver them from sin, death and the dominion of Satan. God wishes the wife to be the husband's co-heiress to eternal life, and the Christian husband cannot work out his own salvation without contributing also to his wife's. Thus the crown, of which paganism robbed woman, is restored to her by Christianity; and there is no happier place on earth than a home where man and wife labor together with the one aim of securing life everlasting.

Some men, however, though they profess to be Christians, do not appreciate domestic happiness, and seek their pleasure away from their own homes. Their amusements may be innocent, but it is always a misfortune when a man does not prefer his home to any other place, though this does not mean that he ought never to go out into society. Both husband and wife are sometimes obliged to do so.

DUTIES OF WIVES

Every married couple should mutually respect each other. A wife is not her husband's slave, but St. Paul writes: "Let the women learn in silence, with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to use authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed; then Eve. And Adam was not seduced, but the woman, being seduced, was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 11-14). "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife" (Ephes. v. 22, 23). "As the Church is subject to Christ, so also let the wives be to their husbands in all things" (*ibid.* v. 24). And St. Peter says: "In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands, that if any believe not the word, they may be won without the word, by the conversation of the wives, considering your chaste conversation with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel, but the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Peter iii. 1-6).

In our Lady we have the most perfect instance of a woman adorned with a quiet and meek spirit. At the marriage-feast she showed her interest in a matter which her Divine Son had reserved for Himself; so He said: "Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." Without any further question or explanation she turned to the servants, saying: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Could she have set us a better example of womanly humility, gentleness and submission?

We may believe that she treated her husband, in their quiet home, just as she treated her Divine Son at the feast, and that her meek and gentle spirit was precious in God's sight. Holy Scripture tells us that every wife should be adorned with this spirit, whereas women who love to command do not imitate

the models held up to us in the Bible. As St. Peter says, a good woman's adornment consists not in anything external, but in her quiet spirit. Her true sphere of action is her home; and every woman able to work for the welfare of her household is bound to do so; this is her chief business in life, especially if she be married. In her spare time she may care for the sick and poor, and still be occupied in work befitting her and precious in the sight of God, provided that it does not cause her to neglect her own home, and that she displays charity and humility in all that she does. Work for others is peculiarly suited to women who have not a household of their own demanding their attention. A Christian home is a sanctuary which the wife should do her best to adorn; and her efforts may render it the happiest place on earth. Its true value is seen most plainly in times of misfortune. As long as all is well with a man, he may scarcely appreciate his wife and home, but let some disaster overwhelm him and the world leave him in the lurch, his wife does not forsake him, but loves him and stands up for him, so that he finds peace at home, in spite of the storms outside. Many a man has learned in times of sorrow to thank God for blessings hitherto not valued at their true worth, perceiving that the world can offer him nothing comparable with the joy of possessing a home where a Christian wife reigns supreme.

Christianity has raised woman from a degraded position, but it has not imposed upon her the duty of attracting attention by her activity. Quite apart from Christianity, the world has attempted to improve the status of woman, but in so doing it has overlooked humility, and has taken her away from the work assigned to her by God, and given her aims and occupations identical with those of man. It is characteristic of the spirit of the age that thus no attention is paid to the plain indications of God's design. We hear much of the emancipation of women, and perhaps those who demand it have some justification for their claims. Woman is certainly entitled to receive adequate education, and to be permitted to enter careers for which her physical and intellectual powers may fit her. But one who "emancipates" herself from all laws and

comes forward as man's rival in every department of public life is unworthy of the sacred position and duties of womanhood.

EXHORTATION

For married life to be what God intended, it is absolutely necessary that the marriage should be truly Christian, and this brings us to the central point of to-day's Gospel, and we see what is its chief lesson. When we read that Jesus Christ was a guest at a wedding feast, we realize that He would fain be present whenever a marriage takes place, and take up His abode in every home, so as to sanctify the union and the household with His presence. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts xvi. 31). Reserve for Christ a dwelling place in thy heart; let His spirit rule in thy home, and thou wilt indeed be happy. Every Christian knows by experience that happiness is to be found nowhere but with Christ, and when He reigns supreme in a household, the spirit of charity influences all its members. Follow, therefore, the example of the people in Cana, and invite Jesus Christ to your house.

Where faith is living, there is a good and happy family life, impossible under other conditions. If a worldly spirit predominates in your home, you must be worldly yourself, and in need of true conversion. Do not suppose that it is more important to practice Christian charity and forbearance anywhere else rather than at home, in your daily intercourse with your family and at your daily occupations. Invite Jesus to take up His abode with you. It was at Cana that He worked His first miracle, and His disciples believed in Him. He will work miracles in your house, too, and accomplish marvellous things, so that you will believe in Him still more firmly, the more He manifests His glory in the sanctuary of your own home.

The Duties of Our Catholic Men in Their Home-Life

BY THE REV. REYNOLD KUEHNEL

When we look for a model family we must turn our gaze towards distant Nazareth, to the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

For your own family life you cannot find a more saintly or perfect model than that family. The zealous Christian mother finds her ideal in the life of the holiest of mothers, Mary. Children find in the Christchild the model of perfect obedience. Fathers find their most beautiful model in the life of St. Joseph. If you, Catholic men, can come close to this perfect model, St. Joseph, you may well be satisfied.

When you Catholic men knelt at the foot of the altar, holding in your hand the hand of her you love, what thoughts and hopes, what fears and doubts crossed your mind! A young woman leaves her home, her people, her comforts and her girlhood friends, to put herself completely at your mercy. Your bride knew well what she left behind, but had no idea what she was to receive in exchange. She made a step into the dark for your sake, because she loved you. There, at the foot of the altar, you heard her promise that she would be ever true to you, in sickness and in health, in riches or poverty, in prosperity and in misfortune, till death would part you.

What duties do you owe to your wife?

FIDELITY

In the first place you owe it to her to remain ever faithful to her.

When a home is broken up the reason is often that the man has given his affection to another woman. The world excuses the man's adultery by calling the second woman the "affinity," and forgives the man. If the same man should have the slightest suspicion that his wife is guilty with another man the outraged husband would often take the law into his hands by committing one or two murders. And again the world forgives the man. The man may deceive his wife ever so often, it

matters little in the eyes of the world as long as he keeps his wife in clothes and spending money. Indeed, we cannot expect much better from the world, outside of the Catholic Church, because matrimony is merely a matter of convenience in the eyes of the worldly. A faithless husband is looked upon as a sport, a faithful wife as a good-enough household drudge.

It is not for us to pattern our conduct according to the dictates of the children of the world, because we are children of God. It is to be considered a matter of course that a Catholic husband will never be guilty of the sin of adultery. I might, then, dismiss this topic with that remark. Yet, I feel in duty bound to continue on this subject, asking your patience for a few minutes longer, in order to point out to you the dangers of worldly ways, because sometimes you may be in danger of looking at things in the way a careless world looks at them.

Whatever the world may say to the contrary, impurity in all its various forms is at all times forbidden. Whether people be married or single, they are never allowed to sin against purity. The most abominable, and most inexcusable impurity of all, is for a married man to be guilty of adultery, wronging his wife by giving his affection to a strange woman.

Alas, many pure married women become the pitiable victims of filthy disease because their husbands contracted the disease in unlawful intercourse. Many babies are born with syphilitic sores because their fathers were not true to their wives. Again, many children are brought into this world who, in later years, when they learn the truth, must hate and curse their unknown fathers. What widespread and untold misery the crime of adultery can bring upon an innocent wife, upon innocent children!

Nor is this all.

Even many murders are traceable to adultery. In order to hide disgrace the guilty parties will often decide to kill the child before its birth. These little ones are excluded from the kingdom of heaven because they were killed pitilessly before they can be baptized. Will they not on judgment day make themselves heard before the whole world? Then they will

expose their vicious fathers and mothers to the reprehension of all mankind. Crime may be added to crime to cover up the sin of adultery, but the reckoning will come as surely as night follows day.

I know that none of you men would want to entertain even an evil thought freely and knowingly. Yet, you are not certain that you will not fall a victim to this dreadful vice of adultery if you expose yourselves to temptation. Strong and good men have fallen because they yielded to temptation. For that reason avoid the company of men who consider matrimony in the light of a joke. Avoid drinking to excess and also the kind of company that induces drunkenness. Drunkenness is the straight road to impurity. A man who is a drunkard will hardly ever be a pure man. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule; but they are the exceptions—not the rule.

LOVE

You, Catholic men, should take pride in being faithful to your wives. Your wives go to the very door of death each time they present you with a son or daughter, and certainly they deserve from you faithfulness. Reserve whatever affection you are capable of for your wives alone. They have placed all their hopes and ambitions, all their thoughts, their heart, their very life into your strong hands and they deserve from you that you give them what they have given to you. They have given you their body and soul, their heart and mind. You owe them in justice your body and soul, your heart and your mind. Be faithful to them, for they deserve this, nay, they have the right to demand it from you.

When you see an old father and mother surrounded by a circle of grown up sons and daughters, who already have established their own families, and see them looking up to their aged parents with love and reverence, what is your first thought? There is an old happy couple who have ever been true to each other. You see the old mother giving her life partner a loving look as though she wished to say: "Look how God rewards a faithful husband and wife. We have loved each other and have loved you, children, next to God. You,

too, be true and faithful to one another and in your old days you, too, will, with the blessing of God, see happy and good children around you as now I see you."

You, Catholic men, are the builders of your families. It is within your power to build up a home that will be the pride and consolation of your declining years.

If you, Catholic fathers, intend to do your duty, bear in mind your own future and the future of your children. When your own sons and daughters have grown up so that they understand what it means to be faithful and true, you will want them to look up to you with love and reverence, and you yourselves will want to be able to look them in the face. You will desire your sons and daughters to feel proud of you. All this is within your power if you remain true to your wives. Your grownup sons and daughters will rather than money have an honorable name. They will gladly share your poverty, sickness and trials; but they will not be willing to forgive you when they learn that you have been brutal to their mother, and faithless to your wife.

Remain ever true, loyal and faithful to your wives, so that from your sons and daughters you may receive gratitude for a name that has been kept clean and honorable by you.

References

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Catholic Encyc., Vol. V, p. 782; Vaughan, *The Divine Armory,* etc., pp. 819, 820; Callan, *Illustrations for Sermons,* etc., pp. 234 ff.; Jarrett, in *Meditations for Layfolk,* p. 246.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUBJECT

THE VIRTUE OF FAITH

TEXT

And Jesus, hearing this, marvelled; and said to them that followed him: Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel.—Matt. viii. 10.

Analysis

Introduction. Our Lord came down from the Mount of the Beatitudes, healed a leper at the foot of the hill, and started on His way towards Capharnaum. As He approached the town there came to Him messengers, begging that He would heal the servant of a Roman centurion. This Roman officer had command over one hundred soldiers in the garrison at Capharnaum, and, although a Gentile, was a devout proselyte, and had built a synagogue for the Jews. So great was his faith in our Lord that when he heard the Saviour was coming to cure his servant, he came out and told Him not to inconvenience Himself by going all the way to the house of the sick man, but only to say the word and the servant would be well. This Gentile looked upon the power which Christ had over life and death, over sickness and health, in the same way as upon his own power and authority over the soldiers under him: it was only necessary to say a word, to give a command, and obedience would follow.

This admirable faith of the Roman centurion, so highly praised by our Lord Himself, has been considered throughout the centuries as a model for all true believers.

I. **The meaning of faith.** 1. Faith is a supernatural, theological virtue by which, relying on the authority of God, we firmly believe whatever God has revealed and the Church proposes for our belief. 2. Faith is called a *virtue* because it is a

habit inclining us to good; it is *supernatural,* because it is not acquired by our own efforts, but is infused into our souls by God Himself; it is termed *theological,* because it has God for its immediate object; its motive is the *authority of God,* because only God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, is the author of the truths of faith. 3. God delivers His word to us, not directly, but through His infallible Church (Matt. xxviii. 19; Rom. x. 17). Scripture and tradition, without an authoritative interpreter, are not reliable guides in matters of faith, as is proved by the numerous mutually contradicting Protestant sects. 4. Faith differs, (a) from opinion, which is doubtful assent; (b) from knowledge, which rests on experience or reason; (c) from human belief, which depends on the authority of men. 5. The object of faith is not some, but all of the truths that God has revealed and proposes to us through the Church. 6. The Church proposes the teachings of revelation to us mainly in the Apostles' Creed, and in the definitions of the Popes and Councils. 7. The Apostles' Creed contains the fundamental truths which we are to believe. 8. It is necessary *to believe* all the truths the Church teaches, but it is not necessary *to know* them all explicitly. 9. The truths absolutely necessary to be known by all are: (a) that there is a God; (b) that there is a future life of reward and punishment (Heb. xi. 6 ff.). Since the preaching of the Gospel, it is also required to know and believe the mysteries of the Trinity and of the Incarnation and Redemption (John xiv. 6; xvii. 33). Anyone ignorant of these essential truths cannot be absolved in confession. Parents should instruct their children in these important doctrines from their earliest years. 10. Truths that all are bound to know, as far as they are able are: (a) the Articles of the Creed; (b) the Commandments; (c) the Sacraments, at least those that a given person needs to receive; (d) the Lord's Prayer, the acts of the various virtues, such as, the acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition.

II. The qualities of faith. 1. Faith must be *firm, i.e.,* it must exclude all doubt, hesitation, or disbelief. 2. It must be *blind, i.e.,*

we must not seek any other reason than the authority of God for what we are asked to believe (John xx. 29). The reason for this latter quality is that faith, being concerned with supernatural truths, is above the natural grasp of our finite minds. The fact that we cannot understand the truths of faith is no reason for rejecting them; (a) because they have God for their author; (b) because the natural world is filled with mysteries which we accept but cannot understand, *e.g.*, electricity, life, the power of the elements, etc.; (c) because constantly we blindly trust the authority of scientists, historians, doctors, lawyers, etc. 3. Faith is *reasonable, i.e.*, we can establish on rational grounds all the foundations of faith, namely, the existence, knowledge, and truthfulness of God, the divinity of Christ and of the mission of the Church. 4. Faith should be *entire, i.e.*, it must extend to every dogma without exception.

III. The necessity of faith. 1. Faith is necessary for salvation (Heb. xi. 6), for it is the root and foundation of our justification. 2. Without faith it is impossible to perform works that are meritorious of life eternal, although one may do many things that are naturally good. 3. Faith imposes a two-fold obligation: (a) a negative obligation, which always binds, of never sinning against it; (b) a positive obligation of making acts of faith before God and of professing our faith before men. 4. Sins against faith are: (a) *infidelity, i.e.*, the total rejection of the Christian religion by those who remain outside the true faith, although they know it sufficiently well to embrace it; (b) *apostasy, i.e.*, the rejection of the Christian religion for a false one; (c) *heresy, i.e.*, the obstinate denial of an Article of faith by a baptized person; (d) *deliberate doubt* concerning a matter of faith; (e) exposing one's self to the danger of losing the faith by keeping bad company, reading injurious literature, etc. 5. We are obliged to make acts of faith from time to time, especially when in danger of losing our faith. 6. It is never permissible to deny the faith before men, even in appearance (2 Mach. vi. 21 ff.), or by silence; on the contrary, a person is bound to profess his faith publicly

whenever God's glory or our neighbor's good requires it (Matt. v. 16).

Lessons. 1. The knowledge derived from faith is infinitely superior to that which comes from human wisdom, and is at the same time far easier and more secure. How highly then should we appreciate the gift of faith! 2. We should carefully avoid all things by which faith is *lost*, such as, wilful doubt or denial of Articles of faith; or *imperiled*, such as, neglect of religious duties, bad books or company, mixed marriages, Godless education, etc. 3. We should pray for a great and living faith.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Preface

Meaning of the Word "Faith"

In preparing and instructing men in the teachings of Christ the Lord, the Fathers began by explaining the meaning of faith. Following their example, we have thought it well to treat first in order what pertains to that virtue.

As the word faith has a variety of meanings in the Sacred Scriptures, it may not be unnecessary to observe that here we speak of that faith by which we yield our entire assent to whatever has been revealed by Almighty God.

That faith thus understood is necessary to salvation no man can reasonably doubt; particularly as the Sacred Scriptures declare that "without faith it is impossible to please God."[1] For as the end proposed to man as his ultimate happiness is far above the reach of the human understanding, it was therefore necessary that it should be made known to him by Almighty God. This knowledge, however, is nothing else than faith, by which we yield our unhesitating assent to whatever the authority of our Holy Mother the Church teaches us to have been revealed by Almighty God; for the faithful cannot doubt those things of which God, who is truth itself, is the author. Hence we see the great difference that exists between this faith which we give to God, and the credence which we yield to profane historians.

[1] Heb. xi. 6.

Faith differs in degree; for we read in Scripture these words: "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt," [2] and, "Great is thy faith," [3] and "Increase our faith." [4] It also differs in dignity for we read: "Faith without works is dead," [5] and "Faith which worketh by charity." [6] But although faith is so comprehensive, it is yet the same in kind, and the full force of its definition applies equally to all its varieties. Its fruit and advantages to us we shall point out when explaining the Articles of the Creed.

THE CREED

The first and most important points of Christian faith are those which the holy Apostles, the great leaders and teachers of the faith, men inspired by the Holy Ghost, have divided into the twelve Articles of the Creed. As they had received a command from the Lord to go forth "into the whole world," as His ambassadors, and preach the Gospel to every creature,[7] they thought it advisable to draw up a formula of Christian faith, "that all may speak and think the same thing"; [8] and that among those whom they should have called to the unity of faith, no schisms should exist, but that they should be perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment. This profession of Christian faith and hope, drawn up by themselves, the Apostles called a "symbol," either because it was made up of various parts, each of which was contributed by an Apostle; or because, by it, as by a common sign and watch-word, they might easily distinguish false brethren, deserters from the faith, "unawares brought in," [9] "who adultered the word of God," [10] from those who had pledged an oath of fidelity to serve under the banner of Christ.

[2] Matt. xiv. 31. [3] Matt. xv. 28. [4] Luke xvii. 5.
[5] James ii. 17. [6] Gal. v. 6.
[7] 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20. Mark xvi. 15.
[8] 1 Cor. i. 10. [9] Gal. ii. 4. [10] 2 Cor. ii. 17.

Part I

On the Twelve Articles of the Creed

DIVISION OF THE CREED

Christianity proposes to the faithful many truths, which either separately, or together must be held with an assured and firm faith. Among these that which must first and necessarily be believed by all is that which God Himself has taught us as the foundation and summary of truth concerning the unity of the divine essence, the distinction of three persons, and the actions which are peculiarly attributed to each. The pastor will inform the people that the Apostles' Creed briefly comprehends the doctrine of this mystery.

For, as has been observed by our predecessors in the faith, who have treated this subject with great piety and accuracy, the Creed seems to be divided into three principal parts: one describing the first Person of the divine nature, and the stupendous work of the creation; another, the second Person, and the mystery of man's redemption; a third, comprising in several most appropriate sentences the doctrine of the third Person, the head and source of our sanctification. These sentences are called Articles, from a comparison frequently used by the Fathers; for as in the members of the body there are various distinct articulations, so in this profession of faith, whatever is to be believed distinctly and separately from anything else, is rightly and suitably called an Article.

Article I. of the Creed. I Believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth

MEANING OF THIS ARTICLE

The meaning of the above words is this: I believe with certainty, and without a shadow of doubt profess my belief in God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, who by His omnipotence created from nothing, preserves and governs the heavens and the earth, and all things which they contain: and not only do I believe in Him from my heart, and profess this

belief with my lips, but with the greatest ardor and piety I tend towards Him, as the supreme and most perfect good. Let this serve as a brief summary of this first Article. But since great mysteries lie concealed under almost every word, the pastor must now give them a more careful consideration, in order that, as far as God has permitted, the faithful may approach, with fear and trembling, to contemplate the glory of His Majesty.

MEANING OF THE WORD "BELIEVE"

The word "believe" does not here mean "to think," "to imagine," "to be of opinion," but, as the Sacred Scriptures teach, it expresses the deepest conviction of the mind, by which we give a firm and unhesitating assent to God revealing His mysterious truths. As far, therefore, as regards the use of the word here, he who firmly and without hesitation is convinced of anything, is said "to believe." [11]

CERTAINTY OF FAITH

The knowledge derived through faith must not be considered less certain because its objects are not clearly comprehended; for the divine light in which we see them, although it does not render them evident, yet leaves no doubt on the mind regarding them. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath Himself shone in our hearts,[12] that the Gospel be not hidden to us, as to those that perish.[13]

FAITH EXCLUDES CURIOSITY

From what has been said, it follows that he who is gifted with this heavenly knowledge of faith is free from an inquisitive curiosity. For when God commands us to believe He does not propose to us to search into His divine judgments, or inquire into their reasons and their causes, but demands an unshaken faith, by which the mind rests content in the knowledge of eternal truth. And indeed, since we have the testi-

[11] Rom. iv. 18-21. [12] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [13] Ibid. v. 3.

mony of the Apostle that "God is true and every man a liar," [14] and since it would argue arrogance and presumption to disbelieve the word of a grave and sensible man affirming anything as true, and to demand that he prove his statements by arguments or witnesses, how rash and foolish are those, who, hearing the words of God Himself, demand reasons for the heavenly and saving doctrines which He reveals? Faith, therefore, excludes not only all doubt, but even the desire of subjecting its truths to demonstration.

OPEN PROFESSION OF FAITH NECESSARY

The pastor should also teach, that he who says, "I believe," besides declaring the inward assent of the mind, which is an internal act of faith, should also openly profess and with alacrity acknowledge and proclaim what he inwardly and in his heart believes. For the faithful should be animated by the same spirit that spoke by the lips of the prophet when he said: "I believe, and therefore did I speak," [15] and should follow the example of the Apostles who replied to the princes of the people: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." [16] To this we should be encouraged by these noble words of St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. [17] Again, the truth of this doctrine is expressly confirmed by these words of the same Apostle: "With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." [18]

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

From the words "In God" we may learn, how exalted are the dignity and excellence of Christian wisdom, and what a debt of gratitude we owe to the divine goodness. For to us it is given at once to mount as by the steps of faith to the knowledge of a being surpassing in excellence, and in whom all our desires should be concentrated.

[14] Rom. iii. 4. [15] Ps. cxv. 1. [16] Acts iv. 20.
[17] Rom. i. 16. [18] Rom. x. 10.

I. KNOWEDGE OF DIVINE THINGS OBTAINED THROUGH FAITH MORE READILY THAN THROUGH REASON

For there is a great difference between Christian philosophy and human wisdom. The latter, guided solely by the light of nature, advances slowly by reasoning on sensible objects and effects, and only after long and laborious investigation is it able at length to contemplate with difficulty the invisible things of God, to discover and understand a first cause and author of all things. Christian philosophy, on the contrary, so quickens the human mind that without difficulty it pierces the heavens, and, illumined with the splendors of the divinity, contemplates first, the external source of light, and in its radiance all created things; so that we experience with the utmost gladness that "we have been called," as St. Peter says, "out of darkness into his admirable light," [19] and "believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable." [20]

Justly, therefore, do the faithful profess first to believe in God, whose majesty, with the prophet Jeremias, we declare "incomprehensible." [21] For, as the Apostle says, "He dwells in light accessible, which no man hath seen or can see"; [22] and God Himself speaking to Moses, said: "No man shall see my face and live." [23] The mind cannot rise to the contemplation of the Deity, whom nothing approaches in sublimity, unless it be entirely disengaged from the senses, and of this in the present life we are naturally incapable.

"God," however, "left not himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." [24] Hence it is that the philosophers conceived no mean idea of the Divinity, ascribed to Him nothing corporeal, gross, or composite. They considered Him the perfection and fullness of all good, from whom, as from an eternal, inexhaustible fountain of goodness, and benignity, flows every perfect gift to all creatures. They called Him the wise, the author and lover of truth, the just, the most beneficent, and gave Him also many other appellations ex-

[19] 1 Pet. ii. 9. [20] 1 Pet. i. 8. [21] Jerem. xxxii. 19.
[22] 1 Tim. vi. 16. [23] Exod. xxxiii. 10. [24] Acts xiv. 16.

pressive of supreme and absolute perfection. They recognized that His immensity filled every place, and His omnipotence extended to every thing.

All these truths the Sacred Scriptures express far better and much more clearly, as in the following passages: "God is a spirit";[25] "Be ye perfect, even as also your heavenly Father is perfect";[26] "All things are naked and open to his eyes";[27] "Oh! the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God";[28] "God is true";[29] "I am the way, the truth and the life";[30] "Thy right hand is full of justice";[31] "Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature";[32] and finally: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell thou art there; if I take wing in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me," etc.,[33] and "Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?"[34]

2. THE KNOWLEDGE DERIVED FROM FAITH MORE SECURE

These great and sublime truths regarding the nature of God, which are in full accord with Scripture, the philosophers were able to learn from an investigation of God's works. But even here we see the necessity of divine revelation, if we reflect that not only does faith, as we have already observed, make known at once to the rude and unlettered, those truths which only the learned could discover, and that by long study; but also that the knowledge obtained through faith is much more certain and more secure against error than if it were the result of philosophical inquiry.

3. THE KNOWLEDGE DERIVED FROM FAITH IS MORE EXALTED

But how much more exalted must not that knowledge of the Deity be considered, which cannot be acquired in common by

[25] John iv. 24. [26] Matt. v. 48. [27] Heb. iv. 13.
[28] Rom. xi. 33. [29] Rom. iii. 4. [30] John xiv. 6.
[31] Ps. xlvii. 11. [32] Ps. cxliv. 16.
[33] Ps. cxxxvii. 7, 8, 9, 10, etc. [34] Jer. xxiii. 24.

all from the contemplation of nature, but is the peculiar privilege of those who are illumined by the light of faith? This knowledge is contained in the Articles of the Creed, which disclose to us the unity of the divine essence and the distinction of three persons, and show also that God Himself is the ultimate end of our being, from whom we are to expect the fruition of the eternal happiness of heaven, according to the words of St. Paul: "God is a rewarder of them that seek Him." [35] The greatness of these rewards, and whether they are such that human knowledge could aspire to their attainment,[36] we learn from these words of Isaias uttered long before those of the Apostle: "From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears; the eye hath not seen besides thee, O God, what things thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee." [37]

Sermons

Dangers to Faith

BY THE REV. G. LEE, C.S.SP.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency may be of the power of God, and not of us.—2 Cor. iv. 7.

My brethren—Faith is a divine virtue, divine in origin, in object, in exercise. It is a heavenly gift, of untold value, being both the condition and the foundation of Christian life. Wherever it exists there is, or was meant to be, the incomprehensible exalted dignity of sonship and friendship with God. It may be hindered in its efficacy and effects; but if let work in our souls, it makes us pleasing to our Creator, capable of possessing and enjoying Him, fit to see Him and be like Him. Plainly it is a treasure, such a treasure that though the infinitely good God can give it as a gift, He could not create anyone who would have a right to it. Being, as we call it, supernatural, it is immeasurably above the claims of all actual and possible creatures.

But our familiarity with the name of this virtue may

[35] Heb. xi. 6. [36] 1 Cor. ii. 9–14. [37] Isa. lxiv. 4.

occasion our forgetting or overlooking its greatness. Yet the things said about it in Holy Writ should always keep our estimate of it very elevated and our eager affection for it ever undiminished. Our Lord made it the first condition of His action in the world, causing His most blessed Mother herself to be called *blessed* exactly because she *believed* (Luke i. 45). All graces He was ready to grant to those who had faith, letting His divine power do to them just according to their faith, even saying it was their faith that wrought His wonders in their bodies and souls. His praises were for those who showed faith, great faith; His regrets that He did not always meet such faith as He might have expected; His sad questioning whether when He came again He should find faith on the earth. His reproach oftenest addressed to His disciples was that their *faith was little;* His most comprehensive exhortation to them was to *have the faith of God.* And when He would finally safeguard them, and all who through them should believe, His way was to pray for their head *that his faith fail not.*

The Apostles got to understand their Master on that point sooner than on others, so that when His suggestions seemed above them, their immediate, unconditioned prayer was *Lord, increase our faith!* They carried the same view into their ministry, their exultance being that God was giving faith to all, that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, that the people were continuing in faith, that faith was purifying their hearts, that they were strengthened in faith, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts, *passim.*)

That this virtue is precious and that we have it, is enough to indicate that it is in danger; for we are poor guardians of a thing so sacredly valuable. 'Tis indeed the divine treasure in earthen vessels. To it the Apostle explicitly refers in the text quoted, as his accompanying words show. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," he writes, "hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." How splendid his description of faith: the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus!

This treasure is variously imperiled by our earthly weakness.

For orderly treatment we may consider its dangers under two broad heads: they are either of the nature of ignorance, or of the nature of immorality.

IGNORANCE

First, ignorance endangers faith. At the merest glance it may be seen that there is opposition between them, for faith is a virtue of the intellect, while ignorance is a vice of the very same faculty. On closer scrutiny it becomes still more evident that they are necessarily antipathetic. The things of faith have to be learned; they are not acquired by nature or instinct, nor usually by inspiration alone. What we believe is what God has said; and hence we must know that He did speak; know, too, at least summarily, what are the things He really said. Ignorance in these matters may make faith impossible, or, at best, imperfect and unstable. This is the only human ignorance that can fully bear the name; for a man who understands what his Creator says to him and wants him to know, can never be justly called an ignorant man. The question is not, therefore, of our having much or little scholarship, much or little book-learning—though that, rightly handled, can give vast help in both the acquisition and the preservation of divine truth. The ignorance that really endangers belief is ignorance of the articles of faith, ignorance of their meaning and of the authority on which we receive and hold them. Certain degrees of this ignorance may be involuntary and hence blameless; but indifference about knowing Christian doctrine, unwillingness to take or seek religious instruction, can never be characteristic of a man who is and wishes to remain earnestly Catholic. Good souls take the heavenly truths that come their way, faster than the thirsty ground takes the fertilizing shower. They think there is much to learn and that they have acquired but little; and both thoughts are true. The simplest catechism in your hands, my brethren, is like a rich country in great part unexplored: like a mine of wealth very little worked. Nor must you forget that though God offers the treasure of His truth to all, He has made it a hidden treasure which requires manful delving to be unearthed, a pearl of great price which demands deep diving to be brought to light. The more earnest the search for truth, the more is it appre-

ciated when found; and the very common, though very superficial, idea that Christian truth is the only truth for whose acquisition no pains need be taken, is a standing danger to the solidity and permanency of Catholic faith.

More dangerous than even the partial ignorance of the articles of faith is ignorance of the grounds of faith, ignorance of the reasons for the hope that is in us. This latter ignorance is more open to attack; and, as the world runs, to lie open to attack on one's religion is to be in a sadly perilous position. Now, where faith is most traditional, its grounds are generally well held. Peasants, very little lettered, if at all, are often quick to answer when asked why they believe some part of the Creed, that God said it; and if pressed to tell how they know that God said it, they reply that His Church so teaches. While they hold this ground their faith is secure; they are on the rock as well of theology as of revelation. Him only, indeed, the First Truth, do we really believe; but He has said that hearing His Church we hear Him. People, however, whose social atmosphere is poisoned with error, and whose domestic atmosphere is no antidote, have to look sharply to the shiftiness of their own minds and to the impulses they inevitably receive from their unbelieving surroundings. If they lay themselves open to every wind of doctrine, they court shipwreck. Be on your guard, my brethren; you carry about with you a precious treasure, and many lie in wait to despoil you. In strictly religious matters listen only to "one having authority"—as even envious Jews recognized that our Lord had, and as common sense shows that His Church has. Beware of the sowers of error. The worst ignorance is the falsehood that prevents the learning of truth. Such is the falsehood of all non-Catholic schooling in questions really Christian; such is the falsehood of Godless journalism in all concerns of the soul. Keep clear of such influence. The Apostle says of those who have erred from the truth that "their speech spreadeth like a cancer" (2 Tim. ii. 17). Of the world and of its history learn whatever true things you meet; but remember and understand that our ever old, ever new Catholicity is as well the storehouse as the preserver of all truth. God made His Church the treasury of the human family, having in it, in place and order, everything that is good for man

both to know and to desire. If petty minds, pitifully ill-tutored, come piping that they have just discovered a means of shaking the house upon the rock, be rather amused than disturbed. The winds and the rains have long been beating on that house, and still it stands. The wagging of idle tongues will hardly shiver its massiveness. As it is itself the very "pillar and ground of truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15) against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail" (Matt. xvi. 18), those, who, in wise confidence, hold their ground within its sacred walls, are sure of never being overthrown.

But as the enemy is crafty, we must be provident and have ready an armory of facts for his confusion: we may need them when obscurity of mind happens to ourselves, or when we can hold out a hand to those who grope—for every man has charge of his brother. Grasp well, then, my brethren, that all truth is of God, as is all reality, and that no one truth ever contradicts another. If a man should pretend to you that his science won't agree with your religion, be sure that he is mistaken either about the science or the religion, probably about both. Be not slow to recall that our great teachers, even our saints, have often been great scientists, too; that, in fact, the boasted sciences of the present day owe immensely more to men of fervently Catholic life than to men of any other single description. Those were the truly scientific, the truly wise, men who so cleverly gripped our little ball of clay as not to loose their hold on the heaven of God. To the flimsy pretences of shallow book or paper you need give little time or attention. Impious stupidities are best unheeded. If a passing observation to your religion seems to require an answer, be ready to give it or to get it, knowing always that the apparent difficulty has already been solved some thousands of times. "Nothing new under the sun," is specially true of error; nothing new in it but the form, which is never more than a new distortion of facts. The Lord's Word does not pass away, nor does the Creed of His saints. Hence to think, even vaguely and distantly, that anything can ever be solidly advanced against a point of your Catholic belief, would be to show lamentable ignorance and to indicate the imperative need of further instruction for the safeguarding of your divine faith.

IMMORALITY

The second great danger to faith may be called immorality. It is a widespread danger, as widespread as human nature. Be not surprised, my brethren, at the term or at its application. Whatever is sinful is immoral, inasmuch as it contravenes the laws of conduct; and whatever makes for sin, or even for the lower natural life, is necessarily inimical to so holy and perfect a virtue as divine faith. Arguments need not be multiplied; hear the Old Testament and the New: "The wicked man is void of knowledge" (Prov. xxix. 7); "for wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wis. i. 4); "everyone that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved" (John iii. 20); "how can you believe, who receive glory one from another; and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek?" (Ib. v. 44); "you do not believe because you are not of my sheep" (Ib. x. 26). So, no light, no knowledge, no wisdom for the sinful; no believing for the evil, the proud, the disobedient, who hear not the Shepherd's voice, nor come when He calls. It is not that every sin, be it even mortal, immediately destroys faith: holy Church found it necessary to define the contrary; only sin against faith at once destroys faith. But all sin obscures, weakens and endangers it. The word of God says that we can neither commence nor continue to believe without divine help. And if we turn that help aside? If we reject it? The Holy Ghost alone can form in us acts of this supernatural virtue. But if we sacrilegiously expel Him? if we close our souls against His breathings, if we heartlessly shut our ears to His unspeakable pleadings? In a small yacht, as you are all aware, you may cross a wide lake or ascend a strong river—provided you have sound wind-filled sails. But you will not go far if you keep out of the way of the wind, if your sails are torn and worthless, if you refuse to carry or hoist any sails at all. So do many Catholics in the progress of Christian life.

This point, my brethren, needs much attention from some of you. The earthen vessel in which we have so divine a treasure as faith, is, you must admit, perilous enough in its unstable fragility, without being sordidly neglected, without being corroded and

buffeted by filth and iniquity. Now, you easily grant that you fail in other matters, but not, you think, in faith. You do not see that contradicting your religion in practice is endangering your belief of it. I know, my brethren, and am glad to proclaim that poor sinners can fall very low and yet never doubt about Catholicity. In that, too, is their one hope of salvation; for faith keeps open their access to the Church, and access to her is access to God's mercy. They begin to look hopeless only when, by word or act, they cast themselves into the morass of soul-destroying heresy. 'Tis of apostates St. Paul uses the fearful words about the impossibility of being renewed again to penance. But notice that on this very question of preserving or losing faith, the same Apostle has a word of warning for those who fail not in belief but in conscience. When he writes: "Having faith and a good conscience, which some rejecting have made shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. i. 19), he sufficiently shows that where conscience was otherwise violated the way was taken toward loss of belief. He continues to enforce that teaching by speaking of the mystery of faith that is to be held "in a pure conscience" (Ib. iii. 9). The words seem like an echo of his abiding anxiety about the heavenly treasure which he had been instrumental in placing in so many earthen vessels.

But earthly as we are, we yet can have this good conscience, this pure conscience: not, however, with sin. All sin is iniquity and foulness; hence with it, of any kind, conscience is bad and unclean, and faith feels not at home. Two vices are so speedily destructive of the delicate virtue that we require special caution against them. Impurity and pride are necessary and deadly enemies of this sacred dignity of our elevated nature. It has been figuratively yet accurately said that as was St. John the Baptist in the court of Herod, so is faith in the unchaste soul: beheading is the consequence. For the proud we have the Lord's intimation that they could not believe in Him so long as they sought false glory. Witness the Pharisees, who knew so much of the law and professed belief so formally, yet persisted in rejecting the true Messias even when testified to by Himself, by His Father, and by the Holy Spirit!

CONCLUSION

To what, then, my brethren, do our reflections lead us? Surely to the conclusion that, as faith is most high and precious, so must our jealous care of it be most humbly assiduous. We should not lose it, we would not lessen it: we need it all for our eternal salvation, for our filial service of our heavenly Father. Without it we cannot please God, without it we can be but condemned. For no earthly bribe will we betray it, for no fleshpots renounce it, for no mess of pottage barter it, for no passing enjoyments endanger it. Far from us be the folly of the worldlings who have finally to say: "We have erred from the way of truth; and the light of justice hath not shined unto us; and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us" (Wis. v. 6); farther still be the counsel of the malicious who said to God: "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job xxi. 14). We, my brethren, believe in the Almighty, we serve Him and find profit in praying to Him. We know that of His wrath the unbelieving wicked shall drink; that their lamp shall be put out; that a deluge shall come upon them; that they shall be as chaff before the face of the wind, and as ashes which the whirlwind scattereth. Fearing our human weakness, but trusting in the grace of faith which, as we so often sing, alone suffices to strengthen the sincere heart—*ad firmandum cor sincerum sola fides sufficit*—we simply hold our ground in the ranks of the Church's children who have their eyes opened, who are converted from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, who receive forgiveness of sins, and a lot among the saints by the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Ib. et Act xxvi.)

Faith

BY THE VERY REV. F. C. DOYLE, O.S.B.

THE NATURE OF FAITH

In the Sacred Scriptures the word "faith" has many significations, such, for instance, as fidelity to one's plighted word, the voice of conscience, confidence, hope, and, lastly, that assemblage of Christian truths to which we give the name "our faith." But

in none of these significations do I employ it here. By "faith" I mean that gift of God by which we firmly believe, as revealed by Him, all truths, whether written or unwritten, proposed to us by the Church.

In order to have a clear notion of what this definition contains, you must bear in mind that there is what is called the habit of faith and the act of faith. In baptism the habit of faith is communicated to us. It consists in certain dispositions, tendencies, inclinations which make easy for us the acts of the virtue of faith, when we have attained the age of reason. This habit is lost only by a formal act of unbelief; but though thus lost, it may be recovered by repentance, by humble confession and the absolution of the priest, when these acts are possible.

Being imparted to us in our infancy, this habitual faith is a gratuitous gift of God's infinite mercy, for which we should never fail to return to Him most heartfelt thanks. The habit of faith then bestowed is sufficient to save the souls of those who die before attaining the age of reason; but for the salvation of those who reach that age it is not enough. Besides this, they must have the act of faith—that is to say, they must with their minds believe and with their wills adhere to the truths revealed by God, who, to secure this adhesion, has imparted to them the habit of faith which makes that adhesion easy. Hence, when speaking of faith, which is the first disposition requisite for justification, the Council of Trent says: "Men helped and excited by divine grace are freely moved toward God, believing to be true those things that have been divinely revealed." By which words it points out to us that the intelligence enlightened by divine grace offers these truths to the will, which in its turn, being moved by divine grace, accepts and adheres to them.

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

After these preliminary remarks on the nature of faith, I may say that when I speak of faith, it is always of this actual faith which must be exercised during this present life. First of all, this actual faith is so necessary that without it it is impossible to please God. Consequently, works cannot be good, salutary, meritorious for life eternal unless accompanied by faith and proceed-

ing from faith as their root. If such good works as justice in our dealings with others, compassion for the poor, fidelity, honesty, temperance, and the like, are performed without faith, they can not be counted among supernatural works, nor are they deserving of an eternal reward. They are only natural virtues. They are praiseworthy and morally good. Consequently, they are recompensed by temporal prosperity. But they are void of that supernatural goodness which would render them agreeable to God in the order of salvation. From this it is evident how necessary is faith; for man cannot be saved without the merit of good work; but what are termed good works derive from faith their worth before God.

THE OBJECT OF FAITH

Having pointed out to you the necessity of this actual faith, let me now set before you the object of that faith, or the truths which you must believe. These truths consist of whatever is proposed to us by the Church "as revealed of God," because the ordinary means employed by Him to make known to us the truths revealed by Him is the living, teaching voice of the Church founded by Him to guide us to heaven. There is no doubt whatever that He might have effected this in some other way; also, that occasionally souls are illuminated by direct revelation from Him. But ordinarily it is, as we have said, by the means ordained by Him for this purpose: "Faith comes by hearing" (Rom. x. 17)—that is to say, by attending to the living, teaching voice of the Church. Hence the command of Christ to His apostles: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations. . . . Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15). Hence, also, in the conversion of St. Paul, He sent him for instruction to Ananias; and in the case of Cornelius the Centurion, that devout man was referred to St. Peter, just as in these days men are referred to the Church and to her ministers.

Now, though the Scriptures contain the infallible word of God, the truths revealed by Him, it is not to them that men are sent for instruction and guidance in the ways of God. First, because of the vast multitudes of men that are ignorant, uneducated; secondly, because for even the educated few, the Scriptures con-

tain innumerable difficulties which it is impossible for them to solve. The result of appealing to them and of making them the rule of faith is seen in our own days in the innumerable sects to which that unwise proceeding has given rise. Still less are men referred to tradition, which is the result of the constant, perpetual testimony of the Fathers, the Councils, and of the faithful generally; because its teaching is as difficult to seize as is that of the Sacred Scripture. Therefore, God has willed to make all matters of faith depend upon the living and perpetual teaching of the Church. To that Church He has committed the guardianship and the interpretation both of Scripture and of tradition, just as the rulers of a country commit to a chosen body of jurists the interpretation of its laws. Therefore, it is to the Church that God wills all men to have recourse in all matters pertaining to faith, and of those who did not do so, He says: "If they will not hear the Church, let them be to thee as the heathen and the publican" (Matt. xviii. 17).

For these reasons we say that men must believe whatever the Church proposes to them as revealed by God. These truths constitute the object of our faith. Without any exception whatever, they must all be believed, no matter whether they are clear, manifest and adapted to our intelligence, or are obscure, mysterious, and incomprehensible; whether they are speculative and refer to our intellect, or are practical and refer to our conduct. If in them we make any exception, embracing all the rest but excluding only one, we are by that act swept away from the Catholic Church and included among the number of Jews, infidels, heretics. Why is this? It is because the rule of faith is the acceptance of the authority of the Church, whereas the rejection of that authority and the selection for belief of only what meets with our approval is heresy, that is, is making our own caprice, our own self-will the rule of our faith.

Supposing, then, that we accept the Church as our authority, what sort of belief are we to accord to the truths proposed by her for our acceptance? Is it necessary, for instance, that we should know them and believe them all distinctly and separately, or will it suffice to accept them all *in globo* and believe them on the faith of the Church? In reply to these questions, I say, first, the

Church does not exact a distinct and express knowledge of all the truths recognized and defined by her, because such a knowledge is simply impossible for the great bulk of the faithful. Secondly, I say that the implicit belief of all the truths proposed by the Church will not suffice, because the express and distinct belief of certain determined truths has always been necessary for salvation.

To make this quite clear to you, I may say that the truths of faith are of two kinds: there are the truths which must be believed in order to win salvation; then, there are the truths which must be believed and which are necessary only by precept. The first are of a necessity so absolute that even an involuntary, inculpable ignorance of them makes salvation impossible. Of this nature are such truths as the existence of God, the rewarder of good, the punisher of evil; His unity of nature and trinity of persons; the Incarnation, Passion, and Death of Christ. Express knowledge of these mysteries is necessary, because, in order to be saved, an adult must know his beginning, his last end, and the means to attain it. But the mystery of a God who is a rewarder and a punisher makes us know our beginning and our end; the mystery of a God-man dying for us teaches us the only, the indispensable means for attaining that end; finally, the mystery of the Trinity is inseparable from that of the Incarnation. All this is expressed in these words of Christ: "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

THE MOTIVE OF FAITH

Having thus put before you the truths which you are obliged to know and to believe, let me now explain to you the motive which must move you to believe and to adhere to these truths. The only motive that should incite us to believe is God, His divine word, His authority. This motive makes our faith a theological, supernatural, divine virtue; because by accepting, on the word of God, dogmas that are obscure and incomprehensible, we thereby recognize Him as the God of infinite truth, and the homage which we thus pay to His supreme, infallible truth is one of the principal parts of the worship due to the Deity. If we believe through any

other motive, our belief is not faith, or, at most, it is but a human faith.

THE QUALITIES OF FAITH

If, then, the motive of our faith is the authority or word of God, it is easy to see what must be the qualities that should characterize it, and that must characterize it in order that it may be meritorious and please God. Our faith, in the first place, must be *firm,* excluding all voluntary doubt or wavering. For if our belief in any matter that has been communicated to us is either greater or less in proportion to the credibility of our informant, it must of necessity follow that our belief or faith in what has been revealed by God, and proposed to us by God's Church, must be worthy of Him; it must be without any limit, firm, unwavering, never admitting any voluntary doubt. Observe that I say without admitting any *voluntary* doubt, for involuntary doubt is but a temptation to be resisted.

Besides being firm, faith must be what is called *blind,* never permitting us to ask the why or the wherefore of any truth proposed for our belief by the authority set up in this world by God, for the purpose of guiding us aright. We must act with God and with His representatives as we act with men eminent for their vast learning and for their unvarying truthfulness. When they make a statement on matters concerning which they are regarded as experts, we never venture to ask them for proofs of what they have advanced. Now, if we act thus with men, with how much greater reason should we act thus with God, who cannot deceive, who is the very truth? Therefore, no matter how obscure, how unintelligible the truth proposed for our belief may be, we must close our eyes to the difficulties arising in our intelligence, and humbly trust ourselves to Him, saying: "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. i. 12). We must be content to know and believe the facts of faith without being able to penetrate into them, because our intellect is incapable of so doing, just as our eyes are incapable of seeing that which is invisible—the wind, the odors of flowers, and incorporeal beings like the angels. Nor must we repine at the obscurity enveloping the great truths of faith; we have, perforce, to accept in this way the natural mysteries of even

the world in which we live, and we gladly enough accept them. If, then, we cannot penetrate the obscurity hiding these natural mysteries from our comprehension, why should we grieve and take it amiss that we are unable to penetrate the incomprehensible mysteries of God? Their incomprehensibility is no reason for rejecting them; it is only a reason which points out to us the limited nature of our intelligence. Therefore, our faith must be blind, not seeking the why and the wherefore.

But though blind, it must not and it need not be irrational. There is before our intelligence a wide field in which we may seek to discover the reasons establishing the divine nature of that religion which proposes these mysteries for our acceptance. Having discovered these, our faith is then a rational one. It is able to give a reason for what it believes, though it is unable to comprehend or to explain the mysteries themselves.

CONCLUSION

We may now, in a few brief words, sum up all that we have this day heard concerning faith. It is a gift of God bestowed on us in Baptism, imparting to us a tendency to accept and believe the revelation of God, which tendency passes into actual faith when we arrive at the use of reason. In the case of adults, this actual faith is necessary for salvation, since without it it is impossible to please God. The object of it is whatever has been either revealed by God or proposed to us by the Church. The motive urging us to accept this is the veracity of God, who makes the revelation. Consequently, the qualities or characteristics of faith are its firmness and its blind acceptance of the revelation coming from Him.

What then is your duty with respect to faith? It is to make it living, actual, by the performance of good works. You believe that God is your Father; love, obey, and respect Him. You believe that His providence governs the world; cease to complain of, to murmur against, and to be discontented with your lot. You believe that the Church is the divinely appointed organ through which the truth is brought home to you; respect its laws, obey its wishes. You believe that Christ is present in the august mystery of the Eucharist; venerate that presence, be eager to approach and receive Him with purity and humility of heart. You believe that

Christ is the Judge that will either reward the good or punish the evil done by men; with scrupulous care observe His commandments. You believe that to secure salvation, it is necessary to carry the cross and walk in His footsteps; have not so great a horror of suffering and of the mortifications inevitably to be met with in the way by which Christ advanced to glory. You believe in the faith revealed by Christ; honor it by faithfully doing what it teaches. If you act thus, you may be of good heart, your faith will heal you of all your infirmities. Even if you be dead in sin, your faith will restore you to life: "Your faith will make you whole."

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUBJECT

THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD

TEXT

He that loveth his neighbour, hath fulfilled the law. For thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not kill: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness: Thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—Rom. xiii. 8, 9.

Analysis

Introduction. St. Paul is here pointing out to the Roman Christians the necessity of keeping the Commandments of God. It is true he mentions only the second table of the law, and says in fact that all the commands which God has given to men can be summed up and are contained in the precept to love our neighbor. And this, indeed, is correct, because when our love of the neighbor is, as St. Paul supposes, active, universal and supernatural, that is, when we love our neighbor because he is the image of God, the love of God is really included in our charity and is at the bottom of it. Another reason why St. Paul insisted in this Epistle only on the second table of the law was because in ancient times the obligation to love one's neighbor was not at all felt or lived up to. The pagans and Jews alike were conscious of the need of worshipping God, a Supreme Being, even though in the case of the former the worship was erroneous; but the love of one's neighbor was seriously unrecognized and neglected. There was great need, then, to remind the Roman Christians of this duty, and to present it to them in such a vivid and insistent manner.

I. Meaning of the Decalogue. 1. According to its etymology the word *decalogue* means *the ten words,* because it contains the ten Commandments which sum up the entire law of God.

Those ten Commandments, as we have just seen from the Apostle, can all be reduced to the law of love. 2. From man's very creation God, through the light of reason, imprinted on his soul the unwritten or natural law, which enabled him to discern right from wrong, good from evil. The ten Commandments are only an explicit declaration of this natural law, and hence the precepts of the Decalogue have obliged all men without exception from the beginning of the world. Idolatry, theft, adultery, lying, etc., have ever been contrary to the law of God in all places and among all men. 3. When the light of reason became obscured and men's hearts hardened, it was necessary that God should promulgate more definitely the law of nature, and this He did by the ten Commandments, given on two tables of stone to His own chosen people, the descendants of Abraham, whom He had just before delivered from the bondage of Egypt. The Commandments were given to Moses, the leader of the Israelites, on Mt. Sinai in the desert of Arabia. 4. In abrogating the judicial and ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic Law, our Lord did not abolish but confirmed the moral code contained in the Decalogue, although He did reject the false interpretations given the latter by the Scribes and Pharisees.

II. **Reasons for keeping the Decalogue.** 1. The Commandments have God as their Author and were confirmed by Christ our Lord; hence they begin, "I am the Lord thy God." 2. The Commandments are just. Since God is our Lord and we His servants, it is right that we should consecrate to Him our hearts, words and works, as the first table prescribes. It is likewise reasonable that we should honor our parents, and do to others as we would have them do to ourselves, which is the object of the second table. 3. God is a mighty and jealous Lord and will punish violators of His law. 4. The observance of the Commandments brings with it abundant rewards both in this life and the life to come; our salvation depends upon it.

Conclusion. 1. Thanks to God who has deigned to declare

His will in all that concerns our salvation, and who facilitates the observance of His law by the abundant help of His grace. 2. We should strive to the best of our ability to know and understand the law of God and to fulfill its requirements with exactness, fidelity, and fervor. 3. Let us frequently examine our consciences and compare our daily lives with the precepts of God's Commandments.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Decalogue

THE DECALOGUE AN EPITOME OF THE ENTIRE LAW OF GOD

St. Augustine in his writings remarks that the Decalogue is the summary and epitome of all laws:[1] "Although the Lord had spoken many things, He gave to Moses only two stone tablets, called 'tables of testimony,' to be placed in the Ark. For if carefully examined and well understood, whatever else is commanded by God will be found to depend on the ten Commandments which were engraved on those two tables, just as these ten Commandments, in turn, are reducible to two, the love of God and of our neighbor, on which 'depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'"[2]

KNOWLEDGE OF THE DECALOGUE NECESSARY TO THE PASTOR

Since, then, the Decalogue is a summary of the whole Law, the pastor should give his days and nights to its consideration, that he may be able not only to regulate his own life by its precepts, but also to instruct in the law of God the people committed to his care. "The lips of the priest," says Malachy, "shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of Hosts."[3] To the priests of the New Law this injunction applies in a special manner; they are nearer to God, and should be "transformed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord."[4] Since

[1] Quæstio 140. super Exod.
[2] Matt. xxii. 40.
[3] Mal. ii. 7.
[4] 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Christ our Lord has called them "light," [5] they should be "a light to them that are in darkness, the instructors of the foolish, the teachers of infants"; [6] and if a man be overtaken in any fault, those who are spiritual should instruct such a one.[7]

In the tribunal of penance the priest holds the place of a judge, and pronounces sentence according to the nature of the offence. Unless, therefore, he is desirous that his ignorance should prove an injury to himself and to others, he must bring with him to the discharge of this duty the greatest vigilance and the most intimate and practiced acquaintance with the interpretation of the Law, in order to be able to pronounce according to this divine rule on every act and omission; and, as the Apostle says, to teach sound doctrine,[8] free from error, and heal the diseases of the soul, which are the sins of the people, that they may be acceptable to God, pursuers of good works.[9]

MOTIVES FOR OBSERVING THE COMMANDMENTS

In the discharge of this duty the pastor will propose to himself and to others motives for keeping the Commandments.

I. GOD IS THE GIVER OF THE COMMANDMENTS

Now among all such motives the strongest is that God is the author of the law. True, it is said to have been delivered by angels,[10] but no one can doubt that its author is God. This is clear not only from the words of the Legislator himself, which we shall subsequently explain, but also from innumerable other passages of Scripture, which the memory of the pastor will readily supply.

Who is not conscious that a law is inscribed on his heart by the finger of God, teaching him to distinguish good from evil, vice from virtue, justice from injustice? The force and import of this unwritten law do not conflict with that which is written. How unreasonable then to deny that God is the author of the written, as He is of the unwritten law.

[5] Matt. v. 14.
[6] 2 Tim. iv. 3.
[7] Gal. vi. 1.
[8] Rom. ii. 19, 20.
[9] Tit. ii. 14.
[10] Gal. iii. 19.

But, lest the people, aware of the abrogation of the Mosaic Law, may imagine that the precepts of the Decalogue are no longer obligatory, the pastor will inform them, that these precepts were not delivered as new laws, but rather as a renewal and development of the law of nature; its divine light, which was obscured and almost extinguished by the crimes and long-continued perversity of man, shines forth in the Decalogue with increased splendor. The ten Commandments, however, we are not bound to obey because delivered by Moses, but because they are so many precepts of the natural law, and have been explained and confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

CONSIDERATIONS CALCULATED TO ENFORCE ITS OBSERVANCE

A most powerful argument for enforcing the observance of the law is the thought that the founder of the law is no less a person than God Himself—that God whose wisdom and justice we mortals cannot question, whose power and might we cannot elude. Hence, we find that when by His prophets He commands the law to be observed, He proclaims that He is "the Lord God." The Decalogue also opens with the same solemn admonition: "I am the Lord thy God";[11] and elsewhere we read: "If I am a master, where is my fear?"[12]

That God has deigned to make clear to us His holy will, on which depends our eternal salvation, is a consideration which, besides animating the faithful to the observance of His Commandments, must call forth their gratitude. Hence the Sacred Scriptures, in more passages than one, setting forth this invaluable blessing, admonish us to know our own dignity, and to appreciate the divine bounty: "This," says Moses, "is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of nations, that hearing all these precepts they may say: 'Behold a wise and understanding people, a great nation'";[13] "He hath not done in like manner to every nation"; says the royal psalmist, "and his judgments he hath not made manifest to them."[14]

[11] Exod. xx. 2.
[12] Malach. i. 6.
[13] Deut. iv. 6.
[14] Ps. clxvii. 20.

2. THE COMMANDMENTS WERE PROCLAIMED WITH GREAT SOLEMNITY

The circumstances which accompanied the promulgation of the law, as recorded in the Sacred Volumes, are well calculated to convey to the minds of the faithful an idea of the piety and humility with which they should receive and reverence a law delivered by God Himself. The Jews were commanded by God that for three days before the promulgation of the law they should wash their garments and abstain from conjugal intercourse, in order that they might be more holy and better prepared to receive the law, and that on the third day they should be in readiness to hear its awful announcement. When they had reached the mountain from which the Lord was to deliver the law by Moses, Moses alone was commanded to ascend. Then the Lord, descending from on high with great majesty, filling the mount with thunder and lightning, with fire and dense clouds, spoke to Moses, and delivered to him the law.[15]

In this the divine wisdom had solely for object to admonish us to receive His law with pure and humble minds, and to impress the salutary truth, that over the neglect of His commands impend the heaviest chastisements of the divine justice.

3. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS IS NOT DIFFICULT

The pastor will also teach that the Commandments of God are not difficult of observance, as these words of St. Augustine are alone sufficient to show: "How, I ask, is it said to be impossible for man to love—to love, I say, a beneficent Creator, a most loving Father, and also, in the persons of his brethren, to love his own flesh? Yet,[16] 'he who loveth has fulfilled the law.'"[17] Hence the Apostle St. John expressly says that "the commandments of God are not heavy,"[18] for as St. Bernard observes, "no duty more just could be exacted from man, none that could confer on him a more exalted dignity, none that could contribute more largely to his own

[15] Exod. xix. 10. et seq.
[16] Serm. 47. de temp.
[17] Rom. xiii. 8.
[18] 1 John v. 3.

interests."[19] Hence St. Augustine, filled with admiration of God's infinite goodness, exclaims: "What is man that Thou wouldst be loved by him? And if he loves Thee not, Thou threatenest him with heavy punishment—is it not punishment enough that I love Thee not?"[20]

But should anyone plead human infirmity to excuse himself for not loving God, it is not to be forgotten that He who demands our love pours into our hearts by the Holy Ghost the fervor of His love;[21] "and this good Spirit our Heavenly Father gives to those that ask him."[22] "Give what thou commandest," says St. Augustine, "and command what thou pleasest."[23] Since, then, God is ever ready to help us, especially since the death of Christ the Lord, by which the prince of this world was cast out, there is no reason why we should be disheartened by the difficulty of the undertaking. To him who loves, nothing is difficult.[24]

4. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS IS NECESSARY

Another thought that will go far to persuade obedience to the law is that such obedience is a necessary duty. It is specially necessary to dwell on this point in these our days, when there are not wanting those who, to the serious injury of their own souls, have the impious hardihood to assert that the observance of the law, whether easy or difficult, is by no means necessary to salvation. This wicked and impious error the pastor will refute from Scripture, especially from St. Paul, whose authority they invoke in favor of their impious doctrine. What, then are the words of the Apostle? "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God."[25] Again, inculcating the same doctrine, he says: "A new creature, in Christ, alone avails."[26] By a "new creature in Christ" he evidently means him who observes the Commandments of God; for, he who observes the

[19] Lib. de diligendo Deo, lib. 1.
[20] Confess. c. 5. [21] Rom. v. 5. [22] Luke ii. 13.
[23] Lib. 10. confess. c. 29, 31 et 37; de bono persever. c. 20.
[24] Aug., in Ps. iii.; Bern., Serm. de Dom. in ramis palm.; in serm. de Magdal.
[25] 1 Cor. vii. 19. [26] Gal. vi. 15.

Commandments of God loves God, as our Lord Himself testifies in St. John: "If anyone love me, he will keep my word." [27] A man, it is true, may be justified, and from wicked may become righteous, before he has fulfilled by external acts each of the divine Commandments; but no one who has arrived at the use of reason can be justified, unless he is resolved to keep all of God's Commandments.

5. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS IS ATTENDED BY MANY BLESSINGS

Finally, to leave nothing unsaid that may be calculated to induce to an observance of the law, the pastor will point out how abundant and sweet are its fruits. This he will easily accomplish by referring to the eighteenth psalm, which celebrates the praises of the divine law, among which its highest eulogy is that it proclaims more eloquently the glory and the majesty of God than even the heavenly bodies, whose beauty and order excite the admiration of all peoples, even the most uncivilized, and compel them to acknowledge the glory, wisdom, and power of the Creator and Architect of the universe.

The law of the Lord also "converts souls to God"; for knowing the ways of God and His holy will through the medium of His law, we learn to walk in the way of the Lord.

It also, "gives wisdom to little ones"; [28] for they alone who fear God are truly wise. Hence, the observers of the law of God are filled with a profusion of pure delights, are enlightened by the knowledge of the divine mysteries, and are blessed with plenteous joys and rewards both in this life and in the life to come.

In our observance of the law, however, we should not be actuated so much by a sense of our own advantage as by a regard for the holy will of God, unfolded to man by the promulgation of his law. If the irrational part of creation is obedient to God's will, how much more reasonable that man should live in subjection to its dictates?

[27] John xiv. 21, 23. [28] Ps. xviii. 8.

6. GOD'S GOODNESS INVITES US TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS

A further consideration which should not be passed over is that God has pre-eminently displayed His clemency and the riches of His bounty in this, that whilst He might have commanded our service without a reward, He has, notwithstanding, deigned to identify His own glory with our advantage, thus rendering what tends to His honor, conducive to our interests. This is a great and striking consideration; and the pastor should not fail to impress it on the minds of the faithful, telling them in the language of the prophet whom we have last quoted, that "in keeping the commandments of God there is a great reward." [29] Not only are we promised those blessings which seem to have reference to earthly happiness, such, for example, as to be "blessed in the city, and blessed in the field"; [30] but we are also promised "a very great reward in heaven," [31] "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over," [32] which, aided by the divine mercy, we merit by our holy and pious actions.

A SKETCH OF JEWISH HISTORY

The law announced in the Decalogue, although delivered to the Jews by the Lord from the summit of Sinai, was long before written and impressed by nature on the heart of man,[33] and was therefore rendered obligatory on mankind at all times by the Author of nature. It will be very useful, however, to explain carefully the words in which it was proclaimed to the people of Israel by Moses, its minister and interpreter, and to narrate briefly the history of the Israelites, which is so full of mysteries.

The pastor will first show that from among the nations of the earth, God chose one which descended from Abraham; that it was the divine will that Abraham should be a stranger in the land of Canaan, the possession of which He had promised him; and that, although for more than four hundred years he and his

[29] Ps. xviii. 12. [30] Deut. xxviii. 3. [31] Matt. v. 12.
[32] Luke vi. 38. [33] Rom. i. 19, 20.

posterity were wanderers before they obtained possession of the land, God withdrew not from them His protecting care. They passed from nation to nation and from one kingdom to another people; He suffered no man to hurt them, and He reproved kings for their sakes.[34]

Before they went down into Egypt, He sent before them one by whose prudence they and the children of Israel were rescued from famine. In Egypt such was His paternal kindness towards them, that although opposed by the power of Pharaoh who sought their destruction, they increased to an extraordinary degree; and when they were severely harassed and cruelly treated as slaves, God raised up Moses as a leader to conduct them from bondage with a strong hand. It is especially this deliverance that is referred to in the opening words of the law: "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

REASONS WHY GOD CHOSE THE JEWS

From all this the pastor will remark that of all the nations of the earth God chose only one whom He called "his people," and by whom He willed to be known and worshipped;[35] not that they were superior to other nations in justice or in numbers, and of this God Himself reminds them, but rather because He wished by the multiplication and aggrandizement of an inconsiderable and impoverished nation, to display to mankind the extent of His power and the riches of His goodness.

Such having been the circumstances of the Jewish nation, "he was closely united to them, and loved them,"[36] and Lord of heaven and earth as He was, He disdained not to be called "their God." He desired that the other nations might thus be excited to a holy emulation and that mankind, seeing the superior happiness of the Israelites, might embrace the worship of the true God. In the same way St. Paul says that by placing before the Jews the happiness of the Gentiles and the

[34] Ps. civ. 11.
[35] Deut. vii. 6, 7.
[36] Deut. x. 15.

knowledge of the true God, "he provoked to emulation those who were his own flesh." [37]

PURPOSE OF THE TRIALS INFLICTED ON THE JEWS

The pastor will next inform the faithful that God suffered the Hebrew patriarchs to wander for so long a time, and their posterity to be oppressed and harassed by a galling servitude in order to teach us, that to be friends of God we must be enemies of the world, and pilgrims on earth, and that an entire detachment from the world gives us an easier access to the friendship of God. Further He wished to show all who have been brought to His service how much happier are they who serve God, than they who serve the world. Of this Scripture itself admonishes us: "Yet they shall serve him, that they may know the difference between my service and the service of the kingdom of the earth." [38]

The pastor will also remind the faithful that God delayed the fulfilment of His promise until after the lapse of more than four hundred years, in order that the Israelites might be sustained by faith and hope; for, as we shall show when we come to explain the First Commandment, God wishes His children to depend on Him at all times and to repose all their confidence in His goodness.

THE TIME AND PLACE IN WHICH THE LAW WAS PROMULGATED

Finally, the time and place, in which the people of Israel received this law, deserve particular attention. They received it after they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt and had come into the wilderness; in order that, impressed with a lively sense of gratitude for a blessing still fresh in their memory, and awed by the dreariness of the wild waste in which they journeyed, they might be the better disposed to receive the law. For man becomes closely attached to those whose bounty he has experienced, and when he has lost all hope of assistance from his fellow man, he then seeks refuge in the protection of God.

[37] Rom. xi. 14. [38] II Par. xii. 8.

From all this we learn that the more detached the faithful are from the allurements of the world and the pleasures of sense, the more disposed are they to lend a willing ear to the doctrines of salvation. "Whom shall he teach knowledge," says Isaias, "and whom shall he make to understand the hearing? Them that are weaned from the milk, that are drawn away from the breasts." [39]

Sermon

The Ten Commandments, the Christian Rule of Life

BY THE VERY REV. FERREOL GIRARDEY, C.SS.R.

INTRODUCTION

A young man one day addressed this question to our divine Saviour: "What good shall I do, that I may have life everlasting?" Jesus replied: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 16, 17). There is no more important question for each one of us than that which this young man asked our Lord, for the salvation of our immortal soul, the possession and enjoyment of life everlasting, is our end, our final destiny. All other things are only secondary to our eternal salvation. To secure it we must have faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6), and "he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16). But faith, to be a genuine saving faith, to conduce to and effect salvation, must be a living, active and practical faith. If our faith is not a rule of life for us, if it does not produce corresponding works, it is practically dead, for, says St. James (ii. 14, 17, 26), "what shall it profit, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? . . . Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself . . . Even as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead"; that is, such a faith is useless for securing our salvation. Our divine Redeemer declares that heaven can be gained only by doing the will of God, for He says: "Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but

[39] Is. xxviii. 9.

he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). The good works required for salvation are those prescribed by the commandments of God, for when the young man had asked Jesus, "what *good* shall I *do*, that I may have life everlasting," Jesus replied: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." From these words it is evident that the Commandments of God are, for us all, the Christian rule of life.

THE COMMANDMENTS, THE RULE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Our divine Saviour abolished the Jewish legal sacrifices, ceremonies and customs, but not the ten Commandments solemnly promulgated on Mount Sinai. On the contrary, He confirmed them, making, as we have just heard, their observance the indispensable condition of salvation. "Do not think," He said, "I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am come, not to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17).

The ten Commandments are the essence and expression of the natural law imposed by the Almighty and All-wise Creator to govern and regulate the conduct of man in accordance with his nature, his obligations, his final end. They are also the rule of all human actions, of all human laws. Civil laws, the precepts of parents, of superiors, that do not conform to the ten Commandments, are unjust, can impose no obligation, must not be obeyed, for, as the apostles rightly said: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 29). When there is a doubt as to the justice of human laws, of human commands, the Church is divinely empowered to decide whether they may be lawfully obeyed, and her decisions in such matters are binding on the conscience of everyone.

The Commandments of God are our rule of life, for they determine and regulate our duties toward God, toward ourselves and toward our neighbor. They are, as our Lord declares, reducible to the two great Commandments of the love of God and of the love of our neighbor as ourselves. The first three Commandments regard our duties toward God, and the other seven regard our obligations toward our neighbor and our own selves. The ten Commandments may be summed

up in these words of the Apostle: "Avoid evil and do good" (1 Pet. iii. 11).

Each Commandment forbids certain evil actions or thoughts, and prescribes certain good actions or thoughts. The prohibition of evil is obligatory at all times and everywhere; no person, no power, can lawfully dispense from such prohibition, or allow or prescribe what is evil, *v.g.*, hatred of the neighbor, false oaths, drunkenness, adultery, etc. Each Commandment, in so far as it prescribes some good to be done, is obligatory only at certain times, on the occasions that occur of performing the good prescribed, *v.g.*, acts of obedience to superiors, of charity toward the neighbor, of divine worship, etc. If we truly love God, we shall find no great difficulty in observing the Commandments, for, says our divine Saviour, "if anyone love me, he will keep my word" (John xiv. 23), that is, my Commandments.

The ten Commandments are as binding on us as on the Israelites of old, for, says St. Paul, "circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; but the observance of the commandments of God" (1 Cor. vii. 19). This means that the keeping of the Commandments of God is the only important, necessary and indispensable obligation for all men without exception. Nay, even more; as Christians we have a far stricter obligation to keep them than the Jews, since the Christian religion is as superior to the Jewish as the reality is superior to the figure. It behooves us Christians, therefore, to keep the Commandments more perfectly than was required of the Jews, since our holy religion requires us to be more perfect than they: "For I tell you," says our beloved Redeemer, "that unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . . Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 20, 48).

MOTIVES FOR KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS

We have many powerful motives for keeping the Commandments. In the first place, we should keep them because it is the express will of God. He orders us to "keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17). He has made us for heaven, but says

expressly that we cannot gain heaven without keeping the Commandments. The Holy Ghost tells us: "Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is all man" (Eccles. xii. 13), that is, it is the whole duty of man. Secondly, we are commanded to love God with our whole heart and soul, with our whole mind, with all our strength. But we cannot truly love Him, unless we keep His Commandments, for our divine Saviour says: "If you love me, keep my commandments . . . He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John xiv. 15, 21). Hence, he who wilfully breaks a Commandment, does not really love God. Thirdly, we should keep the Commandments out of gratitude to God, for He is our greatest benefactor, and to Him we owe all that we have and all that we are. "God so loved the world," says Jesus Christ, "as to give his only-begotten Son . . . that the world might be saved by him" (John iii. 16, 17). For love of us "God," says St. Paul, "did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us" (Rom. viii. 32). And the Son of God "loved us and delivered himself up for us" (Eph. v. 2), dying a most cruel and shameful death, to save us. He could not have shown us greater love, for He Himself tells us that "greater love than this no man hath, than that he lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). And Christ laid down His life for us, who were His enemies, through our sins. Gratitude demands that we love Him in return, striving to please Him in all things, and carefully shunning whatever might cause Him the least displeasure. We can do this only by faithfully keeping the Commandments. In the next place, our earthly peace and contentment require it, for, asks holy Job (ix. 4), "who resisted God, and hath had peace"? Disobedience to God's law is a source of uneasiness, of unhappiness. The good Christian, even amid poverty, afflictions, disease, misfortune and other trials, however great they may be, is not unhappy, but enjoys a peace of mind and a contentment which the world can neither impart nor take away, and which, as experience proves, is denied to the sinner amid his apparent happiness, amid the honors, riches and pleasures of the world, for in them the sinner, like Solomon, actually finds only

"vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccles. i. 14). Finally, heaven, with its ineffable joys and perfect happiness can be gained only by faithfully keeping the Commandments. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17). Such is the express teaching of our divine Saviour.

ALL THE COMMANDMENTS TO BE OBSERVED

We must keep all the Commandments without exception, for St. James declares (ii. 10), "whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." This means that the breaking of any of the Commandments in a matter of importance will prevent us from entering heaven, although we may faithfully observe all the other Commandments. To transgress a Commandment in some important point is a grievous sin, which inflicts spiritual death on the soul, and forfeits all rights to heaven. Just as the lesion of a vital organ causes the death of the body, although all the other vital organs may remain sound, so also the violation of one important Commandment brings death to the soul although the other Commandments may have been faithfully observed. Hell, in fact, is full of Christians who kept some of the Commandments, who never, *v.g.*, committed murder, theft or adultery, who never got drunk, but either slandered or hated their neighbor, or yielded to lustful thoughts and desires, etc.

Sin, which is committed by transgressing the Commandments, is the cause of all the evils, sufferings, misfortunes and calamities, which abound in the world. They are the fruits, the punishment of sin in this life. In the next life the punishment of light sins consists in the fearful pains of purgatory, and of grievous sins the endless torments and despair of hell.

OBSERVANCE OF GOD'S LAW ENNOBLES

Some deluded persons look upon the obligation of keeping the Commandments as a sort of slavery, as degrading to human nature. But nothing is more ennobling, or better adapted to impart to men the true liberty of the children of God than the faithful observance of God's Commandments. He who transgresses a Commandment commits sin and yields either to the

suggestions of Satan, to the deceits of the world, or to his own base passions. He thus debases himself, becomes the slave of Satan, of the wicked world, or of his own animal passions, and thus degrades his own noble human nature. "Whosoever committeth sin," says our Lord, "is the slave of sin" (John viii. 34). On the other hand, he who keeps the Commandments, overcomes the devil, conquers the world, subdues his own passions, and submits only to the God of infinite power and perfection, who alone is above him, and thus complies with the law of his nature and attains his end. Hence, as the Church says, to obey and serve God, to keep His Commandments, is actually to *reign*, to rule over everything that tends to degrade the nobility of man's nature. Nothing in this world can then be more ennobling than the faithful observance of the Commandments of God.

God loves and distinguishes those who keep His Commandments. To them He says: "You are my friends, if you do the things that I command you" (John xv. 14). What an honor to be considered by God Himself as a friend! Nay, even more; Jesus Christ holds them so dear, that He hesitates not to say: "Whoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother, my sister, my mother" (Mark iii. 35).

OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS NOT DIFFICULT

Many persons pretend that the Commandments are too difficult to keep. Not a few refuse to believe in the Catholic religion, not so much, in truth, on account of its mysteries, as on account of the obligation of keeping the Commandments; were the Church to allow them to act as they like and to dispense them from the observance of the Commandments, they would most readily accept all her doctrines and become Catholics. But this the Church neither will nor may do, hence they never become Catholics. In like manner some fallen-away Catholics try to justify their course under the plea that they can no longer believe the doctrines they so willingly believed so long as they kept the Commandments and practiced their religion; but it is evident that the real reason of their giving up the faith is that they fear the Commandments and the obligation of confessing, combating and overcoming their weakness in yielding to their passions and transgressing the Com-

mandments. They prefer giving up their faith to giving up their passions!

The Commandments, though difficult of observance in themselves, are not beyond the power of those who have a good will, of those who are not moral cowards. Jesus Christ, who is Truth itself, tells us clearly: "Take up my yoke upon you . . . for my yoke is sweet and my burden light" (Matt. xi. 30, 31); and St. John (1 Jo. v. 3) tells us that "His commandments are not heavy." Their observance does not exceed our strength, for, in the first place, God, being infinitely just, wise and good, cannot and will not lay on us intolerable burdens; secondly, however difficult His Commandments may appear to our human weakness, He will make them easy for us, if we but ask Him for the necessary strength. "God," says St. Augustine, "does not command impossible things, but He admonishes us to do what we can of ourselves, and to ask Him for grace to do what is beyond our power, and He gives His grace to all who pray for it," so that, as St. Paul says, each one may be able to say: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Thirdly, how many as weak as we, beset by even greater passions and more violent temptations, have, by their earnest efforts aided by God's grace, perfectly kept the Commandments, and become great saints! What they were able to perform, what so many, in our own day, can effect, we also can do, if we only have a serious and sincere good will to do all in our power and to beseech God to help us to do what we feel unable to accomplish of ourselves.

The Commandments are not an obstacle to us in this life, but rather a powerful help. They are to us what wings are to a bird. These, whilst adding weight to the bird, do not impede it in its flight; on the contrary, they are indispensable to enable the bird to fly. A bird with its wings cut off is perfectly helpless and unable to fly. In like manner, if we cut off, or break the Commandments, we become not only useless in the world, but even injurious to ourselves, to our neighbor, to society itself by our wickedness and evil example, and are spiritually helpless to reach heaven.

EXHORTATION

Let us have a good will, let us cheerfully keep God's Commandments, for, says St. Paul, "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. xi. 7). Let us not imitate the sick who refuse to take the prescribed remedies, or who take them only with reluctance. Let us keep the Commandments of our good God, not because it is the only way to escape the torments of hell; but let us keep them out of love of God, who is so full of love for us, from a desire, a longing to gain heaven and then share the very happiness of God, our Creator, our Father, our greatest benefactor, our best friend, who loves us exceedingly, and we shall find their yoke sweet and their burden light.

That we may the more faithfully keep the Commandments, let us often reflect on them, on the duties they impose upon us, and examine our conscience as to how we observe them, in what points we transgress them, and how we may avoid further transgressions. Let us imitate David, who loved the Commandments, because he loved God; who constantly meditated upon them, in order to be guided and ruled by them. He exclaims: "O how have I loved thy law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day. Through thy Commandments thou hast made me wiser than all my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have understood more than all my teachers; because thy testimonies are my meditation. I have had understanding above ancients, because I have sought thy Commandments. I have restrained my feet from every evil way; that I may keep thy words. I have not declined from thy judgment, because thou hast set me a law. How sweet are thy words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth. By thy Commandments I have had understanding; therefore have I hated every way of iniquity. Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths. I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of thy justice" (Ps. cxviii. 97–106). Were we, like David, to meditate often and earnestly on the Commandments, and make every effort to observe them faithfully, we should also be able to speak like David. When about to die, he sent for Solomon, his son and successor, to give him his parting advice. He insisted especially on one thing: "Show thyself a man," he

said, "and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to observe his precepts" (3 Kings ii. 2, 3). Take this admonition to yourselves, saying: "Show thyself a true Christian, keep the charge of the Lord thy God, walk in his ways and observe his commandments."

This we will cheerfully do if we really love God. A lover finds nothing too difficult when there is a question of avoiding what may displease his beloved, of doing what may cause pleasure to the one he loves. In like manner, if we really love God above all things; if, like the saints, we are enamored of God, we shall love Him as the saints did, and shall find no sacrifice too great when there is a question of avoiding His displeasure or of pleasing Him. In fact, to be able faithfully to keep God's every Commandment, it behooves us to be willing to make every sacrifice, however painful to nature, to be ready to undergo every loss, every suffering, and even to shed all our blood and give up our life as the martyrs did. That they might not break any of God's Commandments, and especially the first, which forbids giving divine honors to anyone but God, millions, not only of strong men, but of weak women and children, suffered the loss of their goods, imprisonment in fetid dungeons, fearful tortures, and cruel deaths! We should be ready to imitate them, were it necessary for the keeping of the Commandments! When we are tempted to transgress any of the Commandments, let us reflect for a moment on hell and its endless torments, to which such a transgression exposes us! Or, rather, let us then look up to heaven, to the beautiful heaven, where God, our loving Father, dwells, to that abode of delights and joys unspeakable, where endless happiness awaits those who, during their short term of life, faithfully keep the Commandments, and this will persuade us that heaven is well worth all our efforts, all our sacrifices! Yes, dear brethren, look up to heaven, and behold the glorious crown promised to those who keep the Commandments of God, for He says to each one of us: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Apoc. ii. 10).

References

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUBJECT

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: EVIL SPEAKING AGAINST OUR NEIGHBOR

TEXT

Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection; and let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body.—Coloss. iii. 14, 15.

While men were asleep his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way.—Matt. xiii. 25.

Analysis

Introduction. The parable of to-day's Gospel shows us that the good and bad live together in the world, and even in the Church, as the cockle and wheat grow side by side in the field. It is not that God made the world bad, nor that He has not provided His Church with every means of holiness and sanctification; but rather that God's enemy, Satan, has sowed his evil seed in the world, and is the author of the evil that is found in the Church. How like to the evil one are those who sow the seeds of detraction and calumny and all uncharitableness among their brethren in the world and the Church, forgetting or ignoring the beautiful words of St. Paul in the Epistle to-day, that we are all called in one body, and should be bound

together by charity, the bond of perfection, and that the peace of Christ should reign in our hearts.

I. **The nature and malice of evil speaking against our neighbor.** 1. By uncharitable speech is understood every kind of discourse that is calculated to ruin or lessen our neighbor's good name. This sin is committed whether the effect follows or not, and may be committed even when the speaker does not intend the evil effect. 2. The sin of uncharitable speech is mortal in its nature: (a) because Scripture tells us that railers, like idolators and adulterers, shall be excluded from the Kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. vi. 10); (b) because it injures a man unjustly in his good reputation, which is his most precious external possession (Prov. xxii. 1); (c) because it damages a man in his fortune and the dearest interests of his life, *e.g.*, it causes a person to lose his position and means of support, and creates untold misunderstandings, dissensions, etc. 3. Evil speaking, however, may be only a venial sin if the injury done is but slight; and yet even trivial uncharitableness may become serious by reason of the hatred that prompts it, or of the high position of the person attacked, or of the scandal that results, etc., etc. 4. This sin may be committed in indirect ways, such as by faint praise, the use of doubtful expressions, qualifications, contemptuous smiling, shrugging of the shoulders, etc.

II. **Various kinds of evil speaking.** 1. *Contumely* consists in words or actions of injury or derision uttered or performed against a person in his presence. This sin is committed by reproaching a person for his failings, misfortunes, or defects, or by ridiculing him with sarcasm, nicknames, and the like. Such a sin, beside injuring a person's reputation, and giving scandal, is often an indication of hidden contempt and hatred. At the very least it is a sign of ill breeding. Whether it is a mortal sin or not depends upon the intention with which it is uttered and the foreseen effects. 2. *Backbiting* is the circulating of some one's known faults behind his back. The con-

tumelious man is like the dog that barks at you openly, the backbiter like the serpent that stings you unawares (Ecclus. x. 11). Honest criticism is not unlawful, especially as regards public men, but mere personalities should be avoided. 3. *Detraction* (libel) is the revelation of one's secret faults without just cause and behind his back. This is sinful, even though the person detracted be dead or the matter be revealed confidentially to but one person (Lev. xix. 16; Prov. xxiv. 9; Ecclus. xix. 10; Rom. i. 30; Titus iii. 2; Jas. iv. 11). It is not detraction to reveal the faults of others when their own or the good of others requires that the faults be disclosed. 4. *Tale bearing* is the carrying to another secretly of what has been said or done against him, when we intend or foresee that this will sow discord. This vice is severely condemned in Scripture (Prov. vi. 16, 19; Ecclus. xxi. 31; xxviii. 15, 16), and tale-bearers are called by the Fathers "the most terrible plagues of society" (St. Augustine) and "meddlers intent on creating and fomenting discord and scandal" (St. Bernard). 5. *Unjust betrayal of a secret* is a sin whose gravity depends on the intention and the injury done. 6. *Calumny* (slander) is the lying imputation to another behind his back of a fault or crime of which he is not guilty. This is committed not only by those who circulate the lies they have invented, but also by those who exaggerate or put false interpretations on their neighbor's conduct. Calumny is more serious than detraction.

EXHORTATION. 1. Since evil speaking is so sinful, so harmful, and yet so easy, let us set a strict guard over our thoughts, lest we form rash judgments; over our speech, lest we be given to uncharitable talk and conversations; and over our ears, lest we listen to the evil reports of scandal mongers. 2. To avoid rash judgments we should remember that things are often not at all as they appear; to avoid evil speech, let us reflect that each one has enough to do to correct his own failings, without dwelling on those of others; to avoid listening to uncharitable talk, let us shun the company of detractors or show displeasure at their words. 3. Those who, by their evil speech, have done harm to their neigh-

bor must remember that they are bound in conscience to repair the harm they have done.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Eighth Commandment

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT

The great utility, nay the necessity, of carefully explaining this Commandment, and of impressing upon the minds of the faithful the obligation which it enforces, we learn from these words of St. James: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man," and again, "The tongue is indeed a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth," [2] and so on to the same effect.

From these words we learn two truths. The first is that sins of the tongue are very prevalent, which is confirmed by these words of the prophet: "Every man is a liar," [3] so that it would almost seem as if this were the only sin which extends to all mankind. The other truth is that the tongue is the source of innumerable evils. Through its wicked instrumentality are often lost the property, the reputation, the life, the salvation of the injured person, or of him who inflicts the injury. The injured person, unable to bear patiently the wrong, avenges without restraint the contumely hung upon him. The offender, on the other hand, impotently deterred by a perverse shame and a false idea of what is called honor, cannot be induced to satisfy the wounded feelings of him whom he has offended.

Hence the faithful are to be exhorted to thank God as much as they can for having given this salutary Commandment, which not only forbids us to injure others, but which also, if duly observed, prevents others from injuring us.

[1] Exod. xx. 16.
[2] James iii. 2, 5.
[3] Ps. cxv. 11.

THE TWO PARTS OF THIS COMMANDMENT

In its explanation we shall proceed as we have done with regard to the others, pointing out that in it are contained two laws. The first forbids us to bear false witness. The other commands us to lay aside all dissimulation and deceit and to measure our words and actions by the standard of truth, a duty of which the Apostle admonishes the Ephesians in these words: "Doing the truth in charity, let us grow up in all things in him." [4]

THE FALSE TESTIMONY ESPECIALLY FORBIDDEN BY THIS COMMANDMENT

With regard to the prohibitory part of this Commandment, although by false testimony is understood whatever is positively but falsely affirmed of anyone, be it for or against him, be it in a public court or elsewhere; yet the Commandment specially prohibits that species of false testimony which is given on oath in a court of justice. The words of a person who thus solemnly calls God to witness, using the divine name, have very great weight and possess the strongest claim to credit. Such testimony, therefore, because dangerous, is specially prohibited. And, indeed, even the judge himself cannot reject the testimony of sworn witnesses, unless they be excluded by exceptions made in the law, or unless their dishonesty and malice are notorious. This is especially true since it is commanded by divine authority, that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand." [5]

MEANING OF THE WORD "NEIGHBOR"

In order that the faithful may have a clear comprehension of this Commandment, the pastor will explain who is our "neighbor," against whom it is unlawful to bear false witness. According to the interpretation of Christ the Lord, our neighbor is he who needs our assistance, whether bound to us by ties of kindred or not, whether a fellow-citizen or a stranger, a friend or an enemy.[6]

[4] Eph. iv. 15.
[5] Deut. xix. 15. Matt. xviii. 16.
[6] Luke x. 36; Aug., Ep. 52 ad Macedon; de Catech. Rudib. c. 26.

It is wrong to think that one may give false evidence against an enemy, since by the command of God and of our Lord we are bound to love him. Moreover, as every man is bound to love himself, and is thus, in some sense, his own neighbor, it is unlawful for anyone to bear false witness against himself. He who does so brands himself with infamy and disgrace, and injures both himself and the Church of which he is a member, much as the suicide, by his act, does a wrong to the State. This is the doctrine of St. Augustine, who says: "To those who do not understand the precept properly, it might seem lawful to give false testimony against one's self, because the words 'against *thy neighbor*' are subjoined in the Commandment. But let no one who bears false testimony against himself think that he has not violated this Commandment, for the standard of loving our neighbor is the love which we cherish towards ourselves." [7]

FALSE TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF A NEIGHBOR IS ALSO FORBIDDEN

But if we are forbidden to injure our neighbor by false testimony, let it not be inferred that the contrary is lawful and that we may help by perjury those who are bound to us by ties of kinship or religion. It is never allowed to have recourse to lies or deception, much less to perjury. Hence St. Augustine in his book to Crescentius on Lying teaches from the words of the Apostle, that a lie, although uttered in false praise of anyone, is to be numbered among false testimonies. Treating of that passage of the Apostle: "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have given testimony against God, that he hath raised up Christ whom he hath not raised, if the dead rise not again," [8] he says: "The Apostle calls it false testimony to utter a lie with regard to Christ even though it should seem to redound to His praise." [9]

It also not infrequently happens, that by favoring one party we injure the other. False testimony is certainly the occasion of misleading the judge, who, yielding to such evidence, is sometimes obliged to decide against justice, to the injury of the innocent.

Sometimes, too, it happens that the successful party, who by

[7] Lib. 2. de civ. Dei, c. 20.
[8] 1 Cor. xv. 15.
[9] Ad Crescentium. cap. 12–14.

means of perjured witnesses, has gained his case and escaped with impunity, exulting in his iniquitous victory, soon becomes accustomed to the work of corrupting and suborning false witnesses, by whose aid he hopes to obtain whatever he wishes.

To the false witness himself it must be a source of the most painful uneasiness to be conscious that his falsehood and perjury are known to him whom he has aided and abetted by his perjury; yet, encouraged by the success that follows his crime he becomes every day more accustomed to wickedness and audacity.

ALL OTHER KINDS OF FALSE TESTIMONY ARE LIKEWISE FORBIDDEN

This precept then prohibits deceit, lying, and perjury on the part of witnesses. The same prohibition extends also to plaintiffs, defendants, promoters, representatives, procurators and advocates; in a word, to all who take any part in law suits.

Finally, God prohibits all testimony which may inflict injury or injustice, whether it be a matter of legal evidence or not. In the passage of Leviticus where the Commandments are repeated, we read: "Thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not lie; neither shall any man deceive his neighbor." [10] To none, therefore, can it be matter of doubt, that this Commandment condemns lies of every sort, as these words of David explicitly declare: "Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie." [11]

THIS COMMANDMENT FORBIDS DETRACTION

This Commandment forbids not only false testimony, but also the detestable vice and practice of detraction,—a moral pestilence, which is the source of innumerable and calamitous evils. This vicious habit of secretly reviling and calumniating character is frequently reprobated in the Sacred Scriptures: "With him," says David, "I would not eat;" [12] and St. James: "Detract not one another, my brethren." [13]

Holy Writ abounds not only with precepts on the subject, but also with examples which reveal the enormity of the vice of detraction. Haman, by a crime of his own invention, had so in-

[10] Lev. xix. 11.
[11] Ps. v. 7.
[12] Ps. c. 5.
[13] James iv. 11.

censed Assuerus against the Jews that he ordered the destruction of the entire race.[14] Sacred history contains many other examples of the same kind, which the pastor should recall in order to deter his people from such iniquity.

VARIOUS KINDS OF DETRACTION

But, to understand well the nature of this sin, we must know that reputation is injured not only by calumniating the character, but also by exaggerating the faults of others. He who gives publicity to the secret sin of any man, in an unnecessary place or time, or before persons who have no right to know, is rightly regarded as a detractor and evil-speaker, if his revelation seriously injures the other's reputation.

But of all sorts of calumnies the worst is that which is directed against Catholic doctrine and its teachers. Persons who extol the propagators of error and of unsound doctrine are guilty of a like crime.

Nor are those to be dissociated from the ranks of evil-speakers, or from their guilt, who, instead of reproving, lend a willing ear and a cheerful assent to the calumniator. As we read in St. Jerome,[15] and St. Bernard,[16] it is not so easy to decide which is more guilty, the detractor, or the listener; for if there were no listeners, there would be no detractors.

To the same category belong those who cunningly foment divisions and excite quarrels; who feel a malignant pleasure in sowing discord, dissevering by fiction and falsehood the closest friendships and the dearest social ties, impelling to endless hatred and deadly combat the fondest friends. Of such pestilent characters the Lord expresses His detestation in these words: "Thou shalt not be a detractor nor a whisperer among the people.[17] Of this description were many of the advisers of Saul, who strove to alienate the king's affection from David and to arouse his enmity against him.[18]

[14] Esth. 13.
[15] Ep. ad Nepotianum towards the end.
[16] Lib. 2. de consider. ad Eugen., at the end.
[17] Lev. xix. 16.
[18] 1 Kings xxiv. and xxvi.

FLATTERY AND DISSIMULATION ARE FORBIDDEN BY THIS COMMANDMENT

Among the transgressors of this Commandment are to be numbered those fawners and sycophants, who by flattery and insincere praise gain the hearing and good will of those, whose favor, money, and honors they seek, "calling good evil, and evil good," as the prophet says.[19] Such characters David admonishes us to repel and banish from our society: "The just man," he says, "shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head." [20] This class of persons do not, it is true, speak ill of their neighbor; but they greatly injure him, since by praising his vices they cause him to continue enslaved to them to the end of his life.

Of this species of flattery the most pernicious is that which proposes to itself for object the injury and the ruin of others. Thus Saul, when he sought to expose David to the sword and fury of the Philistines in order to bring about his death, addressed him in these soothing words: "Behold my eldest daughter Merob, her will I give thee to wife: only be a valiant man and fight the battles of the Lord." [21] In the same way the Jews thus insidiously addressed our Lord: "Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth." [22]

Still more pernicious is the language addressed sometimes by friends and relations to a person suffering with a mortal disease, and on the point of death, when they assure him that there is no danger of dying, telling him to be of good spirits, dissuading him from confession, as though the very thought should fill him with melancholy, and finally withdrawing his attention from all care and thought of the dangers which beset him in the last perilous hour.

In a word, lies of every sort are prohibited, especially those that cause grave injury to any one, while most impious of all is a lie uttered against or regarding religion.

[19] Isa. v. 20.
[20] Ps. clx. 5.
[21] 1 Kings. xviii. 17.
[22] Matt. xxii. 16.

SLANDER, LIES, AND DISSIMULATION FORBIDDEN

God is also grievously offended by those attacks and slanders which are termed lampoons, and other defamatory publications of this kind.[23]

To deceive by a jocose or officious lie, even though it helps or harms no one, is, notwithstanding, altogether unworthy of a Christian; and of this the Apostle admonishes us when he says: "Putting away lying, speak ye the truth." [24] This vile practice begets a strong tendency to frequent and serious lying, and from jocose lying men contract a habit of uttering deliberate lies, lose all reputation for truth, and ultimately find it necessary, in order to gain belief, to have recourse to continual swearing.

Finally, the first part of this Commandment prohibits dissimulation. It is sinful not only to speak but to act deceitfully. Actions as well as words are signs of our ideas and sentiments; and hence our Lord, rebuking the Pharisees, frequently calls them "hypocrites."—So far with regard to the negative, which is the first part of this Commandment.[25]

WHAT THIS COMMANDMENT REQUIRES ON THE PART OF JUDGES

We now come to explain the meaning of the second part. Its nature and purpose require that trials be conducted on principles of strict justice and according to law. It requires that no one usurp judicial powers or authority, for, as the Apostle says, " it were unjust to judge another man's servant." [26] Again it requires that no one pass sentence without a sufficient knowledge of the case. This was the sin of the priests and scribes, who passed judgment on St. Stephen.[27] The magistrates of Philippi furnish another example: "They have beaten us publicly," says St. Paul, "uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privately." [28]

[23] Concerning lampoons see Bull 147 of Pius V (1572) and Bull 4 of Gregory XIII (1572).
[24] Eph. iv. 25. See S. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 10, aa. 3. 4.
[25] See S. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 211.
[26] Rom. xiv. 4. [27] Acts vii. 59.
[28] Acts xvi. 37. See in 6 lib. 5. tit. 7. de privilegiis c. 1; ibidem lib. 2. tit. 2. de foro competenti.

This Commandment also requires that the innocent be not condemned, nor the guilty acquitted; and the decision be not influenced by money, or favor, hatred or love. For so Moses admonished the elders whom he had constituted judges of the people: "Judge that which is just, whether he be one of your country or a stranger. There shall be no difference of persons, you shall hear the little as well as the great; neither shall you respect any man's person, because it is the judgment of God." [29]

DUTIES OF THE ACCUSED

With regard to an accused person who is conscious of his own guilt, God commands him to confess the truth, if he is interrogated judicially.[30] By that confession he, in some sort, bears witness to, and proclaims the praise and glory of God; and of this we have a proof in these words of Josue, when exhorting Achan to confess the truth: "My son, give glory to the Lord the God of Israel." [31]

DUTIES OF WITNESSES

But as this Commandment chiefly concerns witnesses, the pastor will give them special attention. The spirit of the precept not only prohibits false testimony, but also commands the truth to be told. In human affairs, to bear testimony to the truth is a matter of the highest importance, because there are innumerable things of which we must be ignorant unless we arrive at a knowledge of them on the faith of witnesses. In matters with which we are not personally acquainted and which we need to know, there is nothing so important as true evidence. Hence the words of St. Augustine: "He who conceals the truth and he who utters falsehood are both guilty; the one, because he is unwilling to render a service, the other, because he has the will to do an injury." [32]

[29] Deut. i. 16.

[30] As these forms and their import differ in different countries, this decision is conditional, and does not apply to the practice of our courts of justice.—T.

[31] Josue, vii. 19. S. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 69.

[32] These words which Gratian cited from St. Augustine are not found in the works of the holy doctor. Something similar is found in Isidore, lib. 3, c. 59.

We are not, however, at all times, obliged to disclose the truth; but when, in a court of justice, a witness is legally interrogated by the judge he is bound to tell the whole truth. Here, however, witnesses should be most circumspect, lest, trusting too much to memory, they affirm for certain what they have not fully ascertained.

DUTIES OF ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS

Attorneys and counsel, plaintiffs and prosecutors, remain still to be treated of. The two former should not refuse to contribute their services and legal assistance, when the necessities of others call for their aid. They should deal generously with the poor. They should not defend an unjust cause, prolong law suits by trickery, nor encourage them for the sake of gain. As to remuneration for their services and labors, let them be guided by the principles of justice and of equity.[33]

DUTIES OF PLAINTIFFS AND PROSECUTORS

Plaintiffs and prosecutors, on their side, are to be warned not to be led by the influence of love, or hatred, or any other undue motive into exposing anyone to danger through unjust charges.

Sermons

Rash Judgment and Tale-bearing

BY THE REV. JOHN H. STAPLETON

All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.—Matt. vii. 12.

INTRODUCTION

To be dealt with fairly is what every man asks of his fellows, and to this much he has a right in all justice and charity. He is entitled to be judged according to just reasoning and to enjoy the benefit of every reasonable doubt, if doubt there be. And all attempts to disturb his peace and the harmonious relations which exist between him and his fellowmen, by the retailing of

[33] 14 q. 5. c. non sane; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 71, a. 5.

stories, even true, even not positively defamatory, are in contravention to the laws of God.

The proceedings used in the courts of justice furnish us with an example of the fairness with which the neighbor should be treated; for the law is the highest expression of human wisdom and approaches as nearly to divine perfection as it is humanly possible. The prisoner at the bar is given a fair hearing. He is not condemned except on evidence established by facts duly authenticated; his crime must be proven. If, though charged with wrong-doing, the court does not *know* that he is guilty, or merely comes to the conclusion that he *might* be guilty, he is acquitted, and is to be presumed innocent. A good judge will warn the twelve men, who are to pass judgment on the case, not to base that judgment on appearances, or hearsay evidence, or *ex parte* statements or reports and opinions that vary according to passion, interest and prejudice. Guilt must be declared on proof.

On the other hand, the judge will do all in his power to exclude all matter that does not pertain to the case under consideration and serves only to cloud the minds of the jurors with prejudice against the prisoner. A shrewd, unscrupulous lawyer will move heaven and earth to succeed in this line. He will bring up all the evil the unfortunate is known to have done, will present doubtful deeds in an unfavorable light and call up the dark side of his life. He will maliciously rehash old scandals, dig up buried wrongs and expose to light the hidden skeleton. All this, not so much to injure the reputation of the accused as to influence the minds of the jury, to draw away their sympathy, to arouse their antipathy, to poison them against him and thus force them to return a verdict of condemnation. This he endeavors to do; but the voice of the judge is heard charging them solemnly to pay no attention to such tales and to confine themselves solely to the evidence legally presented.

RASH JUDGMENT

What the fair-minded judge aims at in the case of an unhappy wretch brought before him for judgment, God bids us likewise to do in our relations with our fellowmen. No ques-

tion here, of course, of false witnessing, which is calumny or slander, or of exposing another's secret faults, which is the sin of detraction; but rather of that spirit of unfairness which either, against holy charity and sometimes against justice, judges another rashly, or spreads tales about him, not intended primarily to injure his character, but calculated and intended to create an unfavorable impression, to stir up ill-feeling, to sever friendships, to sow discord, etc. When we are tempted to erect a tribunal in our minds concerning the neighbor, we should try to copy, if not the perfection of the divine Judge, at least the honesty and fairness of the human. A fair trial, then, a prudent judgment, and no testimony heard or given except in its proper time and place!

But not all of us, perhaps, have a clear notion of just what is meant by a judgment, which is often confused with doubts and suspicions, but which is far different from, and much more than, these. Concerning any given statement, the doubter says: "I do not know whether it is true or false," purely and simply; the suspicious person says: "very likely it is true (or false), I am inclined to believe it is, yet I cannot say positively"; he who judges comes out squarely and declares to himself: "this is a fact, or this is not a fact, I know it, there is no doubt about it." Notice the degrees from uncertainty to certainty. In the first case, judgment is totally suspended; in the second, it inclines a trifle to one side or the other; but in the last, the balance goes down with its full weight, the question is settled, the guilt or innocence of a person is decided in the mind of him who judges. When Thomas heard the disciples relate the fact of the Lord's apparition, the question of their veracity arose in his mind. He turned it over, seeking a solution whereby he might satisfy himself as to whether or not they spoke the truth. Apparently he did not succeed, he could come to no definite conclusion. He did not accuse them of falsifying or of dreaming, but he could not on the other hand admit the truth of their words. He decided nothing. Incapable of decision, his mind suspended between acceptance and denial, he refused to judge, dismissed the subject, and awaited further developments. In a word, he doubted.

Or perhaps he went farther. There was evidence on both sides. The story to which he listened could hardly have been concocted; they could not all have been deceived; it was preposterous to charge them with wilful misrepresentation. Yet the thing related was incredible and, naturally speaking, impossible. He dared not deny; he felt inclined to assent. He half believed what he had heard; that is to say, he suspected the truth. More than a doubt therefore; yet not so much as a judgment, for there lacked sufficient evidence on which to found an honest judgment.

Doubt and suspicion concerning the guilt of another arise at times in the mind, and naturally. When there are good reasons for doubting, and suspecting, there cannot be sin. Even void of all reason and motive, a doubt or suspicion that enters the mind is not sinful if we do not take it seriously and make it our own. But if without reasonable grounds we entertain and hold to doubts and suspicions that are prejudicial to the neighbor, we are rash and unfair; and God is offended by the false testimony we bear against him before the bar of our own minds. And the malice thereof is grave if such a state of mind is traceable to deep-seated antipathy, aversion or hatred; for then charity is seriously wounded: or if the conditions are such as to make the doubt or suspicion gravely injurious to him who has a right to our esteem and good opinion, and has done nothing to forfeit it justly.

It is clear that rash judgment is a far greater evil than either rash doubts or rash suspicions, for here the accused is formally condemned without his guilt being established. We no longer think or suspect without sufficient reason that such a one is a thief or a drunkard or a liar or an immoral person, but deep down in our souls we believe, we are convinced that he is such. As far as we are concerned, he is what we have decided him to be. Here then is a man who is declared a criminal and has forfeited our respect; we have sat on his case and handed down the verdict. Yet there is not evidence to prove it. The trial has been a farce, justice has not presided over the deliberations. With nothing proven against him, innocent perhaps, he suffers the punishment of the guilty. The evil and malice

of such proceedings are just as palpable before the judgment-seat of the mind as in the open court of justice. Justice is mocked, charity is made a by-word.

"Who art thou?" says St. Paul, "who judgeth another's servant? to his own lord he standeth or falleth." And St. James declares that such a one simply usurps the place of God. We are commanded by the Lord to "think no evil," that is, to form no unfavorable opinion on slight or insufficient grounds. Apart from the gross uncharity of it, there is always the danger of our being in error. Right or wrong, our rashness is sinful; but when the testimony we bear is at once false and rash, the evil is two-fold aggravated. Rash judgments are nearly always false. It is so easy, when one is envious or vindictive or proud, or desires to lessen his own failings, to be blind to the real merits of the case and to view with distorted vision the appearances that tell against the neighbor. The Pharisees judged Our Lord rashly and falsely on every occasion. If He sat at a feast, He was a wine-drinker and a glutton; if He drove out devils, He was in league with Belzebub and wrought by his power. And even when not actuated by evil motives how easy it is to misinterpret actions, especially as we examine very frequently no more deeply than the surface and take things at first sight! Circumstances pointed to the guilt of the chaste Susanna. Benjamin, found with the golden cup in his possession, was seemingly a thief. Joseph had no word in his defense but the reiteration of his innocence, after the lewd Egyptian had shown the false evidence of his wrong-doing. And to the casual observer Judith must have appeared on an errand of evil, as she wended her way to the tent of Holofernes to deliver her people by the death of the tyrant.

Before judging, then, let us be sure that we have all the facts of the case, nor trust to appearances or the mere word of others. Let us dread to impute improper motives, but rather be inclined to excuse an act, if evil, on the ground of ignorance or misconception, or good, though mistaken, motives. When there is no defense possible, why not attribute the fault to human infirmity and frailty, for which we can well afford to make some allowance. The advice of St. Bernard is good:

"If you cannot excuse the deed, excuse the intention. Attribute the fault to ignorance, to surprise, to frailty. If the act be of so vile a nature that it cannot be justified by any plea of that sort, attribute it to a violent temptation, and say to yourself: 'If I had been so violently tempted, what now would I be?'"

If our charity does not go thus far and we are unwilling to excuse, then let our opinion, if opinion we must have, be at least well founded. Remember that the evil here in question is not in the telling of what we think of people, but in that very thinking unfavorably of them; nor yet in judging them, but in judging them rashly. And a good subject for examination of conscience for us all would be to investigate and see if the knowledge we imagine we have of the misdeeds of others squares with the facts as they really are, and if we have been fair in forming of them the opinion we have. The perfection of charity may not be demanded of us, but fairness that condemns only after an honest trial every man demands of us, even as we would have them treat us. Judge, if you will; but use with others the same rule wherewith you measure yourself. And think not that your uncharitable judgments can be justified because they are confined within the privacy of your own breast.

BACKBITING AND TALE-BEARING

Not only does the judge strive to have genuine evidence presented to show the guilt or innocence of the accused, but he labors, often unsuccessfully, to exclude all such reports and testimony as are craftily introduced for the sole purpose of prejudicing the jury against him; to exclude again the record of his sins, mistakes and disgrace paraded out to contrast with his assertion of innocence and thus discredit him and mayhap condemn him in default of better proof. So does the Lord warn us to "hedge in our ears with thorns and hear not a wicked tongue." The wicked tongues that pick and snap and snarl and industriously ply a trade of cowardly meanness are those of the backbiter and the tale-bearer. These workers of iniquity are close relatives the one to the other, in that their

stock in trade is the known fault of the neighbor: unfortunate happenings, scandalous anecdotes, blunders in speech and action, etc. They differ in that the former speaks for the sole malicious pleasure of talking and being listened to, while the latter carries his unholy wares backward and forward with an eye to making mischief among neighbors. Neither may have the intention or desire to lessen the character of their victims primarily, and thus may not be guilty of detraction proper. They do not precisely utter falsehoods and thereby escape the guilt of slander. But while the one makes evil sport of another's failings, the other seeks with vulgar malice to spread misunderstandings and ill-feeling in the community and to stir up one against another. The latter is, of course, the more criminal; but he often furnishes his partner with material for mischief and not unfrequently produces himself the results of disorder and dissension.

The backbiter is of a keenly observant, even prying, disposition. He has a fine, well developed scent for unsavory gossip, a good memory for evil, and a natural itching for retailing all he sees and hears that reflects on others and will provoke his hearers to merriment and laughter. His mind is well stored; he learns a great deal and forgets nothing; and no tale loses with him in the telling. He watches especially those whom he dislikes or against whom he bears ill-feeling or hatred. Any fault or blunder that he discovers, he blazons forth with delight. He is known far and wide. He is feared and detested, even while he seems to entertain, for "the venom of asps is under his lips." His unfailing topic of conversation being other people's foibles and mistakes, he becomes to the community in which he resides a walking bill-board of gossip and scandal.

The tale-bearer listens with devilish glee, and then is off to relate what he has heard where it will do the most harm. This mischief-maker does not announce to a gaping public, like the other, all that he has ferreted out, but with a fine discrimination picks the party that should not properly be informed and desires it least. He cheerfully carries his Pandora's box of trouble to a spot where peace and harmony have hitherto

reigned, opens it, leaves it, and then goes away with satisfaction in his heart. On his way, with a word here and a word there, he will help along the work of havoc and destruction wherever he espies a favorable opening; and departing, leaves behind him a trail of misery and strife. Thus are friendships severed, distrust engendered, suspicions aroused, etc. After-explanations avail little, once the seed of evil has been planted in the breast of the aggrieved one. By a word the harm is done; many words have not the power to undo it.

Of such a one may be said what David says of his calumniators: "he whets his tongue like a sword, he bends his bow—a bitter thing—to shoot in secret the undefiled." He has armed himself, as says the Scripture again, with "a dart, a sword and a sharp arrow," whereby he ruins the peace of his neighbor and kills his own soul. Holy Writ declares backbiters and tale-bearers accursed: "the whisperer and double-tongued is accursed, for he hath troubled many that were at peace." "The tale-bearer shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated by all, and he that shall abide with him shall be hated." For, "the venom of asps is under their lips," and their malevolent tongues rob people of the priceless treasure of peace.

Being given an open enemy, one may fight. If he spreads false reports about us or maliciously attacks our character and reputation directly, the law may be invoked to punish him. But here all is done behind our backs, in the security of our absence; and what is still more unfortunate, what is related of us is true and supposedly cannot be denied. The advantage taken of us is complete, and we are helplessly thrown on the mercy of harpies who know no mercy. No opportunity of being heard and explaining is afforded us; the harm is done without our being aware, and then it is too late for remedies of any kind.

CONCLUSION

Offenders as we all are, who shall one day be judged with equity, let us judge others as leniently as we hope the Lord will one day judge us, for unto us it will be measured as we shall have measured out to our fellowmen. Imperfect as we

are, let us allow for the imperfections of our brethren, and be not more severe on them than the just Judge, we trust, will be severe on us. Let us leave judgment to the Lord, who alone knows all things, and content ourselves with deserving mercy by the mercy we show unto all men. When the picture of some human misfortune arises before us, tempting us either to pass judgment or to confide to others our impressions, making merry at the expense of a brother or exciting against him the ill will of a neighbor, let us invoke the wisdom that will enable us to turn our eyes from the picture without to a picture within ourselves. And if our vision is not obscured by pride and jealousy we shall perhaps perceive a trace of similarity in both images that may set us thinking of a pity and mercy that we shall perhaps one day stand in need of. "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them." This is the Golden Rule. It is not high spirituality or the acme of perfection in the Christian religion. This rule of conduct was already old when Christ came upon earth, and men without the light of His teachings practiced it. Much more is expected of those who follow the divine precepts of the Redeemer. But this much is imperiously demanded, as the very foundation of a truly Christian life, that we treat our neighbor fairly, treat him as we would wish him to treat us.

Evil Speaking

by the rev. p. a. sheehan, d.d.

natural propensity to evil speech

Dear brethren, the Apostle St. James, in a remarkable passage, says that the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. "The tongue is placed among our members, which defileth the whole body, and inflameth the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell. For every nature of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of the rest is tamed and hath been tamed by the nature of man. But the tongue no man can tame, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison," and there can be no doubt that could we trace the endless miseries of men, the disturbances of society, the dissolution of friendships, the contentions, the

jealousy, the envies that distract communities, and change even the paradise of home life into perpetual misery, we should find all these evils originating in malicious or indiscreet conversation.

SLANDER AND DETRACTION

If I were asked which of the two exercises the most destructive influence on society, the calumniator or the slanderer, the man who out of sheer malice invents gross falsehoods about his neighbor's character or the man who, from vanity, or a petty, garrulous spirit, is forever detracting the little faults of acquaintances, I should answer without hesitation that it was the slanderer, because gross calumnies are generally easily detected, but it is petty slander that lives and works its poisonous way in the minds and hearts of individuals. Slander is that devouring fire which consumes whatever it touches, which burns the good grain as well as the chaff, which spares nothing, not even the most sacred things, which, by a word, changes at once, in our estimation what was most precious into what is most vile, which cannot be smothered or destroyed, because it generally speaks the truth. It is the bond of all evil society, it is the one attraction which binds together in a hallow unreal friendship persons of dissimilar characters and dissimilar tastes, and it springs from a habit of pride which blinds the slanderer to his own faults, and makes him keenly observant of the faults of others, from a spirit of envy and jealousy, which is hurt by the superior excellence of others, and tries to destroy in the eyes of men the character which it is unable to imitate, from a disguised hatred, which seeks to do all the injury possible within the bounds of discretion, or from a spirit of unchristian levity, which, setting at defiance all the dictates of prudence, speaks of its neighbors with an utter disregard of all those principles of charity which Jesus preached and practiced, and which were left by Him to His servants to be practiced by them as the one and only means of being conformed to His image and likeness. And this sin of slander has as companion sins, the sin of dishonesty and double-dealing, because the slanderer is always a flatterer, and he showers his praises

before his face upon the man whose faults the moment after he makes a subject of ridicule; the sin of scandal because the slanderer exposes his own sin of uncharitableness and the hidden sins of his victim, and above all the sin of injustice, in revealing that which ought to be concealed, and robbing your neighbor of that which must necessarily be very dear to him—the estimation of his friends.

I am not speaking now of the gross sin of calumny. That sin requires a depth of malice and an infatuation happily unknown amongst Catholics. There is no Catholic who does not know that, if by a deliberate falsehood he has destroyed the character of his neighbor, he must make full and ample reparation at whatever cost and pain to himself before he can receive absolution. Besides, we are all so liable to error, that the uncharitable man can find material enough for his animadversions, without having recourse to inventions of his imagination. Of the sin of detraction, by which I understand speaking of the notorious sins of others, I have only to remark that it is the falsest of false principles, that because your neighbor's vices are known to many in the community you have therefore a right to propagate the scandal by telling them to as many as you choose. He may have committed himself, but it is to God alone he is responsible. When his crimes come to the knowledge of others, they are not bound to retain their good opinion of him, but you are not justified in bringing them to the knowledge of others and thus destroying the esteem in which he was held by them. And, therefore, you are bound to repair the evil you have done, not only by lessening the scandal you have caused, but also by restoring, as much as possible, the reputation which you have injured. There is no obligation, as in the case of calumny, to proclaim yourselves guilty of falsehood, for I suppose you have spoken the truth, but there is an obligation of repairing the evil you have caused by an increase of charity to him whom you have injured, by putting a charitable construction on his actions, and by keeping before the world his virtues as prominently as you have exhibited his defects.

UNCHARITABLE CONVERSATION

But the kind of speaking to which I would especially direct your attention to-day is that which is included under the general term, "uncharitable conversation." And I mean to condemn that habit which prevails amongst Catholics, who would shudder at the thought of committing a mortal sin, of setting themselves up as censors of their neighbors, habitually criticizing the faults and imperfections of others, attributing unworthy motives even to their good actions, sometimes affecting a sublime pity, like the Pharisee, for the poverty and weakness of others, and thanking God that we are not like them; sometimes praising the virtues of others, merely to get an opportunity of showing their imperfections, speaking sarcastically of others, and wounding their reputations seriously, through levity or vanity, and all those other sins of the tongue, which are so common even amongst well disposed people, and, which taken in the aggregate, are very detrimental to our own souls, and to the Christian charity which ought to prevail amongst us.

You know, dear brethren, where this habit exists in a soul it is evident there can be no true humility. For, were we sensible of our own faults and imperfections, had we, like the penitent Psalmist, our own sins always before our eyes, we should have neither time nor inclination to criticize the faults of our neighbors. But we should ever be engaged in renewing our sorrow for sins forgiven, in thanking God that He has not only mercifully pardoned us, but spared us the shame and humility which many of our brethren, who perhaps have sinned less than we have, had to endure, that He has accepted our secret sorrow instead of demanding public reparation before the world, and that He has preserved for us in the eyes of men an honor and an innocence which we have often forfeited in His sight. Had we this spirit of true humility when the faults of our neighbors reach our ears, instead of exulting over them in a spirit of pride, we should humble ourselves before God, thanking Him that he has preserved us from such sins, or at least that He has pardoned them without demanding from

us the penance of exposure to the world. Remember the words of Jesus, "He that is without sin let him cast the first stone." In the same way, when the faults of your neighbor become such that they cannot be concealed, if you find yourselves without sin and immaculate in the sight of heaven, then, if you are so disposed, you may affect as much virtuous indignation as you please. But so long as before God you are conscious that during life you have been guilty or the same or similar faults, I do not know how, with any show of reason, you can reprehend the faults of others. You are, or have been, as guilty or foolish as he; it is a mere accident that you retain that good opinion which he has lost. An accident may reveal your infirmities also, and then your shame will be aggravated, for ridicule will be added to it. And if all this be true of sin, how much more true is it of imperfections, most of which may be regarded as merely the necessary adjuncts of a fallen humanity.

Compare the least of your sins with the greatest imperfection of your neighbors, and if you are not altogether blinded by pride, you will find yourself suffering severely by the comparison; but perhaps you will excuse yourself by the insignificance of the faults you mention. You would not, on any account, tarnish his moral reputation, but it seems quite a pardonable amusement to dilate upon his little imperfections. Yet the very fact that his faults are venial increases your culpability. If he merits your indulgence, surely it is only pure malignity upon your part that searches out in his character something to be made a subject of your ridicule, and it argues in you a hardness of heart that will excuse nothing. If his faults were great, you would cover them with the charity of your silence, you would think him well entitled to your indulgence, and it is because his faults are trivial you give yourselves the right to censure them. Surely, it is a very hard thing that the very virtues of a man, the sanctity of his life, and the insignificance of his defects should be made a pretext for speaking uncharitably of him. But remember, dear brethren, that this uncharitable conversation about trivial faults may often lead to important consequences. It is often

easier to destroy the esteem in which a man is held by mentioning his infirmities than by inventing gross libels upon him. The very fact of your showing disrespect toward him is sufficient to destroy all respect for him in the minds of others. So long as his imperfections remain unknown, he is presumed to have reached as much perfection as is compatible with human infirmities. I know nothing of him, and therefore I respect him. Now he has a right to that opinion of mine, so long as he does not sacrifice it by any delinquency. But if you manifest a different opinion, and show by your words or by your manners that you do not deem him at all worthy of esteem, I naturally defer to your opinion, and bring him down in my mind from the lofty position he occupied there to a level with common humanity. Besides, with regard to the insignificance of these faults, we must apply the one grand test, "Would we deem it insignificant that the same faults in ourselves should be similarly spoken of?" You do not see the wickedness of speaking ill of others; you cannot understand why he should take grave offence at what you spoke of him, because you presume that he must know that you spoke with no malice or ill-will. But if by accident, or the officiousness of friends, it comes to your knowledge that you have been spoken uncharitably of, that your imperfections have been ridiculed, that your failings have been criticized and made the subject of derision, how do you bear it? Do you excuse your friend on the plea of the insignificance of those faults upon which he commented so uncharitably? Or on the grounds that he had no evil motives, and merely mentioned your faults through talkativeness and levity? Or rather do you not magnify everything; do you not make every little circumstance assume a twofold importance; do you not even judge rashly of his motives, and impute intentions to him as odious and reprehensible as your mortification suggests? It is in vain that you are told that the remarks made concerning you were not spoken through malice, that your character has not in any way suffered, that you were spoken of in a tone of good-natured humor, that no one dreams that the opinions of your friends have undergone any change, you will persist in believ-

ing that your reputation is tarnished, that you have lost the respect and love of your friends, and you will even bring yourselves to believe that a certain resentment against him who has injured you must be retained and encouraged; in fact you have been very much injured, and therefore it is a duty to feel offended.

Dear brethren, there is a vast deal of theoretical humility amongst Catholics, but very little practical humility. Instead of practicing the lessons that were left us by the man of sorrows, who "When he was reviled, did not revile," our gospel is "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, insult for insult, injury for injury," or if we are very good we only ask an apology for an insult, and only the fullest reparation for even imaginary injuries. This shows at least, dear brethren, how irrational is the excuse of the uncharitable, that the faults they speak of are trivial, and their motives are harmless. If you will not accept that excuse, when others speak uncharitably of you, you ought not to prefer that excuse for your uncharitable remarks about others.

SARCASM

With regard to sarcasm in conversation, and that contemptuous way which some people have of speaking about others, I do not know anything which can be taken as a surer indication that it is not the spirit of God that inhabits the soul of him that uses it, and I find, whereas the saints of God, especially the "Fathers of the Church," have again and again spoken with anger and indignation against certain abuses that came under their notice, although again and again they have uttered fierce invectives against those who were depriving God of glory and men of grace, they have never employed the language of sarcasm to extirpate an abuse, or to crush an adversary. They knew well that there is a holy indignation that excludes sin, because anger may proceed from a holy zeal for God's honor, but contempt, disdain, and sarcasm, which is their exponent, can never proceed but from a proud and corrupt heart. And whatever semblance of piety a man may wear, if only once he betrays himself by affecting to despise

the meanest or sinfullest thing upon earth, you may conclude, with unerring certainty, that he is very far, indeed, removed from perfection.

CONCLUSION

Let me exhort you, therefore, dear brethren, to avoid once and for all the habit of evil-speaking, and to cultivate the virtue of speaking charitably of others. Even as a mere social virtue, it is prized, though little practiced by the world. I do not know a higher eulogium can be passed upon a man than this, "He has never been known to utter an uncharitable word." Such a man is loved and respected universally; you have nothing to fear from him. If he ever speaks of you to others, it will be to praise you or to excuse you. As a supernatural virtue, it can only be acquired by constant prayer, and an increased watchfulness over ourselves. For some it will be very difficult, for others it will comparatively easy. But in all it must be taken as the only criterion that we are sincerely disposed to imitate the example of Jesus Christ, and to follow that divine morality which he inculcated. A corrupted heart feels no delight but in what recalls to it the image of its vices; innocent delights are only suitable to virtue. It is only, therefore, in charitable and edifying conversation that a Christian can take delight. As one of the Fathers of the Church has written: "A tongue which has confessed Jesus Christ, which has renounced the errors and splendors of the world, which every day blesses the God of Peace at the foot of the altar, and is often consecrated by participation of the Holy Mysteries should be no longer intolerant, dangerous, and full of bitterness against its brethren. It is disgracing religion, after having offered up pure prayers and thanksgivings to the Lord in the assembly of believers to go and cast out venomous traits of the serpent against those whom the unity of faith, the Holy Sacrament, and even their very errors, should render more endeared and more respectable to you."

References

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUBJECT

THE SINS AGAINST THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

TEXT

You turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.—Thess. i. 9.

Analysis

Introduction. St. Paul's converts at Thessalonica were chiefly of pagan origin, and had consequently been worshippers of idols. After having founded the Church there the Apostle was obliged to flee to other parts on account of the persecutions of the Jews. When he was at Corinth Timothy, whom he had dispatched to investigate the conditions of the converts at Thessalonica, returned, giving a good report of the Thessalonians, whereupon St. Paul addressed this letter to them. The Apostle's purpose in writing this first Epistle was to encourage the new converts, to keep them steadfast in the faith and free from their former idolatrous practices. Whereas before they had been the servants of dumb idols, the mere creations of men, he now exhorts them to serve the living and true God.

In the time of St. Paul nearly the whole non-Jewish world

was given over to idolatry and superstition of all kinds. To-day in most civilized countries the worship of idols in themselves is almost extinct, and yet there still prevails in the world everywhere a great amount of superstition which is opposed to the true worship of God. This, as being against the first Commandment is a grave sin, and it is needful for us to consider it.

I. Superstition as to the object of worship. 1. Idolatry is the giving to any creature, whether statue, animal, or person, the worship of *latria, i.e.*, the homage which is due to God alone. This is never the case in the veneration of the Blessed Virgin, the saints, images, and relics by Catholics, because while we respect and revere these as favored creatures of God, or on account of what they represent, yet we always recognize that they are only creatures and not therefore capable of receiving anything more than an inferior degree of cult. 2. The first Commandment forbids the making of images in two ways: (a) if they are intended to be adored as idols; (b) if they are intended to be representations of the Deity as though God could be seen with bodily eyes or reproduced by material objects. It is not forbidden, however, to represent the Persons of the Trinity in certain bodily forms under which they appeared in divers times in the Old and New Testaments, because these images do not mean that God has a body, but merely express in visible ways some of God's attributes or actions. 3. Again, it is not forbidden by the first Commandment to give to sacred images a certain relative honor on account of what they represent and call to our minds. On the contrary, if we kiss and salute the flag of our country, if we bare our heads in veneration before the pictures and statutes of the great servants of our country and guard the dust of our departed heroes with reverence and awe, if we decorate the graves of our relatives and friends, and tenderly preserve with every mark of respect and affection the pictures and keepsakes of those near and dear to us, what veneration should we not

have for the relics and representations of the Blessed Virgin and the saints, the high servants and chosen friends of God! Scripture and tradition show us how natural and right is this sentiment of the human heart to reverence the things that pertain to the servants of God (4 Kings xiii. 21; Matt. ix. 21; Acts v. 15, xix. 12). Sacrilege and simony, which are profanations of holy things, persons and places, are serious sins against the first Commandment. 4. Besides idolatry, there are other forms of superstition by which the first Commandment can be violated, namely, by direct or indirect dealings with the devil, in order to obtain favors from him. To practice Spiritism, to consult mediums or fortune-tellers, to put faith in charms and omens, to regard all dreams as forebodings of the future, are examples of this form of superstition. In all these ways an effect is expected not from God, nor from natural powers, but tacitly from the demon. Thus the honor due to God is given to the enemy of God.

II. **Superstition as to the manner of worship.** 1. While Christians adore the true God, they may become guilty of superstition through the manner in which they worship God. 2. This can happen, (a) by giving God a false and forbidden worship, for example, by observing Jewish ceremonies, Protestant rites, and the like; (b) by vain and useless practices, such as the "chain prayer"; (c) by attributing to prayers and devotions of the Church a greater value than they possess, for example, by thinking that wearing the scapular will save one's soul in spite of a bad life.

Exhortation. 1. Rejoice in the possession of the knowledge of the true God. 2. Let us worship God according to the teachings of His Church and hence in the manner that is worthy of Him. 3. Let us be most vigilant in avoiding any and all of the superstitious practices mentioned above, and also that practical idolatry which consists in the worship of money, pleasure, and many kinds of vice, so common in the present age.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The First Commandment

WHAT THIS COMMANDMENT FORBIDS

The negative part of this Commandment is comprised in these words: "thou shalt not have strange gods before me." This our divine Legislator subjoins, not because it is not implied in the affirmative part of the precept, which says equivalently: "thou shalt worship me, the only God," for if He is God, He is the only God; but on account of the blindness of many, who of old professed to worship the true God and yet adored a multitude of gods. Of these there were many even among the Israelites, whom Elias reproached with having "halted between two sides," [1] and also among the Samaritans, who worshipped the God of Israel and the gods of the nations.[2]

THIS FIRST COMMANDMENT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE REST

After this the pastor will observe that this is the first and principal Commandment, not only in order, but also in its nature, dignity, and excellence. God is entitled to infinitely greater love and authority with regard to His creatures than the masters or monarchs of the earth. He created us, He governs us, He nurtured us even in the womb, brought us into the world, and still supplies us by His provident care with all the necessaries of life and maintenance.

CHIEF SINS AGAINST THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

Against this Commandment sin all those who have not faith, hope, and charity. Such sinners are very numerous, for they include all who fall into heresy, who reject what the Church of God teaches, who give credit to dreams, fortune-telling, and such superstitious illusions; those who despairing of salvation trust not in the goodness of God; and also those who place their happiness solely in the wealth of this world, in health

[1] 3 Kings, xviii. 21. [2] 4 Kings, xvii. 33.

and strength. But these are matters which the pastor will find developed more at length in treatises on the virtues and vices.[3]

"I AM THE LORD THY GOD, MIGHTY, JEALOUS, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN TO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION OF THEM THAT HATE ME, AND SHOWING MERCY UNTO THOUSANDS OF THEM THAT LOVE ME, AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS."

THE PUNISHMENTS HERE THREATENED APPLY TO ALL THE COMMANDMENTS

In this concluding clause of the first Commandment, two things occur which demand exposition. The first is, that whilst, on account of the enormous guilt incurred by the violation of the first Commandment, and the propensity of man towards its violation, the punishment is properly indicated in this place; it is also attached to all the other Commandments. Every law enforces its observance by rewards and punishments; and hence the frequent and numerous promises of God, which are recorded in Scripture. To omit those that we meet almost on every page of the Old Testament, we read in the Gospel: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments";[4] and again: "He that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven";[5] and also: "Every tree that doth not yield good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire";[6] "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be guilty of the judgment";[7] "If you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences."[8]

THE SANCTION OF THE COMMANDMENTS SHOULD NOT BE PROPOSED TO ALL IN THE SAME WAY

The other observation is that this divine sanction is to be proposed in a very different manner to the spiritual and to

[3] On these various sins see dist. 24. q. 2. in many chapters; Aug., l. de Divinat. dæmon. c. 5; cited in 26. q. 4. c. secundum; Origen, hom. 5 in Josue; cited in 26. q. 2. c. Sed et illud; Aug., l. 2. de Doct. Christ., cc. 19, 20; cited in the same c. Illud, which is 4 c. of Carth., c. 89. See further 26, qq. 2, 3, 5.

[4] Matt. xix. 17. [5] Matt. vii. 21.

[6] Matt. iii. 10. and vii. 19. [7] Matt. v. 22. [8] Matt. vi. 15.

the carnal Christian. To the spiritual who is animated by the Spirit of God,[9] and who yields to Him a willing and cheerful obedience, it is, in some sort, glad tidings and a strong proof of the divine goodness; in it he recognises the parental care of a most loving God, who, now by rewards, now by punishments, almost compels His creatures to adore and worship Him. The spiritual man acknowledges the infinite goodness of God in vouchsafing to issue His commands to him and to make use of his service to the glory of the divine name; and not only does he acknowledge the divine goodness, he also cherishes a strong hope that, when God commands what He pleases, He will also give strength to fulfil what He commands.

But to the carnal man, who is not yet freed from a servile spirit and who abstains from sin more through fear of punishment than love of virtue, this sanction of the divine Law which closes each of the Commandments, is burdensome and severe. The pastor, therefore, as often as he has occasion to explain any of the Commandments will keep this in view; and should encourage his hearers by pious exhortation and so lead them, by the hand, as it were, in the way of the Law.

TWO IMPORTANT INCITEMENTS TO OBSERVE GOD'S LAW

But both the carnal and the spiritual should be spurred on especially by two considerations, which are contained in this concluding clause, and are highly calculated to enforce obedience to the divine Law.

The one is that God is called "the Strong." That appellation needs to be fully expounded to the faithful; because the flesh, unappalled by the terrors of the divine menaces, frequently indulges in the foolish expectation of escaping, in one way or another, God's wrath and threatened punishment. But when the sinner is deeply impressed with the conviction that God is "the Strong," he will exclaim with David: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face?[10] The flesh, also, distrusting the promises of God, sometimes magnifies the power of the enemy to such an extent, as to believe

[9] Rom. viii. 14.

[10] Ps. cxxxviii. 7.

itself unable to withstand his assaults; whilst on the contrary, a firm and unshaken faith, which wavers not, but relies confidently on the strength and power of God, animates and confirms the hopes of man. For with the Psalmist it says: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" [11]

The second spur is the jealousy of God. Man is sometimes tempted to think that God takes no interest in human affairs, and does not even care whether we observe or neglect His Law. This error is the source of the greatest disorders. But when we believe that God is a jealous God, the reflection tends powerfully to restrain us within the limits of our duty.

The jealousy attributed to God does not, however, imply disturbance of mind; it is that divine love and charity by which God will suffer no human creature to be unfaithful with impunity, and which "destroys all those who are disloyal to him." [12] The jealousy of God, therefore, is the most tranquil and impartial justice, which repudiates as an adulteress the soul corrupted by erroneous opinions and criminal passions. This jealousy of God, since it shows His boundless and incomprehensible goodness towards us, should be to us a source of pure and unmixed pleasure. Among men there is no love more ardent, no greater or more intimate tie than that of those who are united by marriage. Hence when God frequently compares Himself to a spouse or husband and calls Himself a jealous God, He shows the excess of His love towards us.

ZEAL IN THE SERVICE OF GOD

The pastor, therefore, will here exhort the faithful that they should be so warmly interested in promoting the worship and honor of God as to be said rather to be jealous of Him than to love Him, in imitation of Him who says of Himself: "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts," [13] or rather of Christ Himself, who says: "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up." [14]

[11] Ps. xxvi. 1. [12] Ps. lxxii. 27. [13] 3 Kings xix. 10.
[14] Ps. lxviii. 10. John ii. 17.

THE LAW CANNOT BE VIOLATED WITH IMPUNITY

The pastor should also explain the threat contained in this Commandment that God will not suffer sinners to run their iniquitous career with impunity, but will chastise them with the fondness of a parent, or punish them with the rigor of a judge. This was elsewhere explained by Moses when he said: "Thou shalt know that the Lord thy God is a strong and faithful God, keeping his covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations; and repaying forthwith them that hate him." [15] "You will not," says Josue, "be able to serve the Lord; for he is a holy God, and mighty and jealous, and will not forgive your wickedness and sins. If you leave the Lord and serve strange gods, he will turn and will afflict you, and will destroy you." [16]

The faithful are also to be taught, that the punishments here threatened await the third and fourth generation of the impious and wicked; not that the children are always chastised for the sins of their ancestors, but that while these and their children may go unpunished, their posterity shall not all escape the wrath and vengeance of the Almighty. Of this we have an illustration in the life of king Josias. God had spared him for his singular piety, and allowed him to be gathered to the tomb of his fathers in peace, that his eyes might not behold the evils of the times that were to befall Juda and Jerusalem, on account of the wickedness of his grandfather Manasses; yet, after his death the divine vengeance so overtook his posterity, that even the children of Josias were not spared.[17]

HOW THE SINS OF PARENTS ARE VISITED ON THEIR CHILDREN

The words of this Commandment may perhaps seem to be at variance with the statement of the prophet: "The soul that sins shall die"; [18] but the authority of St. Gregory, supported by the testimony of all the ancient Fathers, satisfactorily

[15] Deut. vii. 9, 10.
[16] Josue xxiv. 19, 20.
[17] 2 Par. 36. iii. 6. 4 Kings xxii. 20.
[18] Ezech. xviii. 4.

reconciles this apparent contradiction. "Whoever," he says, "follows the bad example of a wicked father is also bound by his sins; but he, who does not follow the example of a wicked father, shall not at all suffer for the sins of the father. Hence it follows that a wicked son, who dreads not to add his own malice to the vices of his father, by which he knows the divine wrath to have been excited pays the penalty not only of his own sins, but also of those of his wicked father. It is just that he who dreads not to walk in the footsteps of a wicked father, in presence of a rigorous judge, should be compelled in the present life to expiate the crimes of his wicked parent." [19]

That the goodness and mercy of God far exceed His justice is another observation, which the pastor will not fail to make to the faithful. He is angry to the third and fourth generation; but He bestows His mercy on thousands.

THE CONCLUDING WORDS OF THIS COMMANDMENT

The words "of them that hate me" display the grievousness of sin. What more wicked? what more detestable than to hate God, the supreme goodness and sovereign truth? This, however, is the crime of all sinners, for as he who observes the Commandments of God, loves God, so he who despises His Law and violates His Commandments, is justly said to hate God.

The concluding words: "And them that love me," point out the manner and motive of observing the Law of God. Those who observe the divine Law should be influenced in its observance by the same love and charity which they bear to God; a principle which should be brought to mind in the instructions on all the other Commandments.

[19] Lib. 15. moral. c. 31; see Aug., epist. 75; St. Thomas, Ia. IIae., q. 87, art. 8.

Sermons

Superstition in Practices of Faith

BY THE VERY REV. THOS. F. BURKE, C.S.P.

NATURE OF SUPERSTITION

Superstition is a word that has been much tampered with, because it can be made to mean so many things. Its meaning depends largely upon the viewpoint of the speaker or writer. To the unbeliever, for example, all Christians in their beliefs and religious customs are superstitious. To the Christian who is not a Catholic, the man who believes in the Real Presence of Christ, who bends the knee before the Blessed Sacrament, who prays before the images of the saints, who wears the scapular, who honors the crucifix, is superstitious. All may agree upon the technical definition of the word, but, outside the Catholic Church there are many varieties in the interpretation of that definition, because there are many varieties of belief.

As a matter of fact, too, the word is used even among Catholics both in a broader and narrower sense. In the former acceptance of the word it signifies all false worship, whether the error be found to lie in the object to which honor is given or in the incorrect manner of worshipping the true God. The heathen, amid the wilds of the uncivilized portions of the earth or in the unchanged civilizations of the past, bowing before his idols of wood and stone or honoring with divine worship the celestial orb of light is, in a true and real sense, guilty of superstition. Likewise, the believer in the true God, who worshipping God, nevertheless refuses to worship in the manner prescribed by God Himself as indicated in His own Word or in the voice of His Church, is rightly considered guilty of superstition.

With the consideration of the sin in this sense we are not at present concerned, nor are we concerned with those objections against the Catholic faith which are made by men who wrongly call superstitions those beliefs and practices which we know

to be sanctioned by God and the teachings of the Church and reason itself. Nor is it our intention to concern ourselves with those remnants of paganism, those natural superstitions which are found the world over in many popular and local customs. They are none the less to be condemned; none the less to be eradicated from our lives. Oftentimes the very one who is all too ready to detect superstition in the devotion of a soul to its patron saint, will give a perhaps unconscious and perhaps unprofessed assent to the very commonest of superstitious ideas. To consider Friday an unlucky day, or as a day unfit for the starting of a journey; to refuse to be one of thirteen to sit at a table; to consider it unlucky to break a mirror; to place a horseshoe over the door for good luck; to find in charms, such as a four-leaved clover, assurances of good fortune, these are but a few of the multitude of superstitions in which the popular fancy indulges and which are unworthy of an intelligent being.

SUPERSTITION IN PRACTICES OF FAITH

Rather we are to consider those superstitions which may at times accompany practices of faith. Such superstitions are the degeneration of true belief; they are the excrescences of faith itself. They argue not the absence of faith, but rather its presence, and also its abuse. It is not useless that we should be warned against them, for it is ever incumbent upon us to keep our religion pure and undefiled. As it is necessary to remove the growths that cling to the hull of a vessel, that the vessel itself may not suffer injury nor its usefulness and speed be affected, so it is required that we keep the ship of faith free from those abuses that would degrade and defile it.

We may say that superstition consists in ascribing to created things powers which they do not possess, either by nature or in virtue of the prayers of the Church. With this definition kept clearly and substantially before our minds, we can see how, unless they realize constantly the prerogatives of God and the supernatural character of religion, some of the faithful may fall into superstitious practices. It must be borne in mind, however, that while we admit the possibility of this sin among the faithful, we by no means admit it to be so general as many of the opponents

of the Church would say. Many have not hesitated to charge whole peoples with it; but such a charge is unfounded and springs either from prejudice or ignorance. As a rule it is from a lack of knowledge that the charge is begotten. Mistaking the true character of the peoples in question, mistaking their familiarity with religious things for a contempt of religious things, mistaking their expressions of fervid devotion for sinful exaggerations, mistaking the outward act and demeanor for the expression of something which does not really exist within the soul, these objectors jump at conclusions which are anything but complimentary to the subjects they dissect. We speak not therefore of seeming superstition, but of that superstition which is real and therefore sinful, a thing which is as much condemned by God as is the sin of theft or of adultery.

SUPERSTITION IN THE ABUSE OF THE SACRAMENTALS

There are some phases of Catholic practice and devotion in which, more than others, this perversion of faith which is called superstition is liable to appear. The first of these, at which we may glance, is the matter of the sacramentals. These are in themselves useful and proper; but that they may be both, they must be employed with a knowledge of their character and of the object for which they are sanctioned. Christ Himself instituted certain means of grace, means that infallibly impart grace of the Holy Spirit to the soul when they are sought with the necessary conditions fulfilled. These we call Sacraments. To attribute to any of the sacramentals a power such as the Sacraments possess would be superstition, for it is from the prayers of the Church and not directly from God that these means of devotion derive their value. The blessing used by the priest in setting apart certain things thus rendered sacred, is given in the name of the Church and does not take to itself any power that is divine. The Sign of the Cross, the crucifix, the rosary, the scapular, medals, the ashes at the beginning of Lent, the palms on Palm Sunday, all these have their legitimate purposes, good and holy. They serve to incite devotion; to increase, when lawfully employed, the love of God in the soul; to fulfil the special purposes for which they

were instituted by the Church; but when some attribute to them a greater efficacy than they possess in the mind of the Church or could possess, they are guilty of giving to them a superstitious value. Let us cite a few abuses sometimes found among those who are indeed filled with faith, but who in certain practices go to a sinful excess. To wear, for example, a crucifix or a medal or the scapular in the belief that it is a kind of charm that will of itself protect the wearer from harm, from death by accident, or fire, or drowning and so on, is nothing short of superstition. It is seen that not the wearing of these but the wearing of them with the wrong intention is what makes the sin. They have their legitimate purposes, and when the wearer is in thorough accord with these they serve rather as helps than hindrances to the true spirit of devotion and religion. We cannot be too careful in such matters, for to allow such practices to degenerate into customs akin to the idolatries and superstitions of the pagans is to bring ridicule and contumely upon the true Religion from those who are but too ready to detect flaws and to attribute them to the Church itself. At the same time it would be the height of cowardice and folly to sacrifice one jot or tittle of the time-honored devotions or sacred customs or holy things that have been sanctioned by the Church and are in thorough accord with the natural and reasonable demands of the soul.

SUPERSTITION IN THE ABUSE OF SAINTLY INTERCESSION

Another principle of Catholic faith which, through its abuse, sometimes has degenerated, in individual cases, and may at times degenerate into superstition, is that of the intercession of the saints. Our belief in this matter is as simply stated as it is thoroughly reasonable. We look upon the holy ones of God, who have fought the battle of life unto victory, who live with Christ in heaven, as souls who can pray for us, who can intercede with God for our welfare. If we do not hesitate to ask those upon earth, and especially those who lead good lives, to pray for us; if the prayer of the just man, even in the time of our earthly pilgrimage, availeth much, surely it is not a violation of any right of God nor a derogation from His powers to

suppose that the saints may likewise pray for us. Superstition, however, arises from attributing to the saints a power that is the possession of God alone and from the expectation that they personally will grant favors and answers to petitions which it is within the power of Divinity alone to bestow. Many spurious prayers are circulated in which the language is such that it can be considered only as fostering superstition. When we are told, for example, that the recital of such a prayer, or its recital at fixed times, or a special number of times or days, will infallibly obtain from the saint to whom it is addressed the favor asked; when it is believed that the swallowing of papers containing the pictures of the Blessed Virgin or another of the saints will infallibly work a cure of disease; when we are informed that certain extravagant and impossible promises will be infallibly fulfilled through prayers to the saints, we are, beyond doubt, in the region of superstition, for such things are nothing but the giving to creatures that which is the prerogative of God alone. Lately, I remember meeting an instance of this kind which will serve as a warning. A prayer was circulated with preposterous conditions attached. The recipient was to recite the prayer a fixed number of times, but further, was to send it to nine other persons with the same instructions. These details were to be followed under penalty of dire punishment if not performed. This is nothing but the grossest superstition and should be, with all things like it, discountenanced and discouraged by every Catholic that loves his faith and his Church.

SUPERSTITION IN UNLAWFUL ATTEMPTS TO PROBE INTO THE FUTURE

Divine power, again, is attributed to things created, and consequently there exists the sin of superstition when from other sources than God Himself a knowledge of the future is sought. The future belongs to God and to God alone. He may reveal it, and may reveal it in any manner He pleases. There can be no question, judging from historical incidents and facts in the lives of the saints and in the records of religion from the beginning, that God has sometimes made known things beyond the present. Nor would it be sinful for anyone to seek such a

knowledge from God, if it be sought with spiritual motives and for the sake of the soul. When, however, it is sought in any other way, the seeker is guilty of superstition. One of the prevalent practices of this sort, existing among the educated as well as the uneducated classes, is the consultation of fortune-tellers, who, by this or that means, profess to be able to reveal the future of our lives. The mysterious probing into time yet unborn, to bring forth its products, seems to have a fascination for many minds and to lead them easily astray from the dictates of common sense. It is this craving for the knowledge of the future that leads people to consult not only the fortune-teller, but also the mediums of spiritism and other vagaries. It is just here, in the midst of the subtle workings of the human mind that is ever seeking the solution of the mysterious, that there is evident the need of an authoritative voice to say what are and what are not the proper methods to be employed in the search. It is because of the absence of such an authority outside the Church that we find that these forms of superstition are far more prevalent among non-Catholics than among Catholics. In the divinely instituted Church, appointed by Christ to be the palpable spiritual guide for man upon earth, we have a protecting power that secures us and guards us from errors that might otherwise attract. And it is this very thing that renders delinquencies of this character graver when committed by the Catholic than when indulged in by those who have no teacher upon whom they may depend. The spiritual knowledge given, the spiritual care bestowed, the numerous means for spiritual advancement sanctioned by the Catholic Church are all-sufficient for the life of the soul. To the one that appreciates all these at their full worth, and that uses them in the proper way, there is no need of the superstitious invention of the human mind.

CONCLUSION

In this consideration of the subject we have but touched upon some of the sins of this class against the virtue of faith; nor is more necessary. For, after all, there is but question of one of the very fundamental principles of religion. If that

principle be duly understood, and there is nothing simpler, there need be no danger of the sin. The principle is that the power which belongs to God alone must not be attributed to a creature. The earth, all created nature of itself gives glory to God; and as such may be used by man to express his worship for his Maker. But nature and all things thus employed must be truly subservient to the idea of worship, the internal sense of worship, existent in the soul and heart of man. As the love of one human being for another which has its home within and may be properly expressed in outward action, degenerates into sin when expressed in an inordinate manner, so too our worship of the true God, while having its legitimate external manifestation, sinks into the basest superstition when it is externalized in unseemly and improper ways.

Knowing the true principles and aware of the dangers of degeneration in worship, it is for us, each and all, to keep within our own souls, and to secure from others, a great respect for our faith by preserving it altogether free from superstitious practices.

Worship

BY THE REV. J. H. HEALY, O.P., P.G.

In times past the word worship was used to express almost any kind of devotion one had for another. To-day we speak of it as the homage or service due to God. No matter what be the intensity or nature of a feeling towards a creature, it is not worship. There can be no affection towards a human being more loving and ardent than the Catholic gives the Blessed Virgin, but this is far different in kind from the affection he gives to God. In the Blessed Virgin he recognizes his own nature at its best, one of his own kind honored greatly by God, one who won merit for the human family by her fidelity to the call. In the saints he sees his own nature, now weak, frail, erring, again strong, courageous, inflexible in good, until that nature is, as it were, glorified. He rejoices over this victory and aims to achieve by study and instruction like results. Always does the Catholic attribute the results in the life of the

holy Virgin or the Saint to the goodness and power of God. God he worships because He is God, because of His attributes, His greatness, His goodness, His mercy, His wisdom, His power.

MAKING IMAGES

By the first Commandment is forbidden the making of anything to be an idol. We know the ancients worshipped the sun and the moon; we know they worshipped the products of their own handicraft, the golden calf, the brazen serpent, the marble statue, as if these things had life in themselves. This is seldom done or heard of in our day. Hardly a person but now knows this is forbidden by the first Commandment.

Fanaticism has at times prompted the making of some image to represent God and such explanation has been given that the unlearned may at times be led to think that God is matter, or has a body, or can be seen by bodily eyes. Anything that is likely to lead to a false notion of God is to be condemned.

RIGHT USE OF IMAGES

In his effort to make devotion lively the Christian has made pictures, images, and the like that bring to his mind the one he venerates. They make him forget the material thing; for him it does not for the time exist. So it is with medals.

The character of a people enters largely into the manner of using these various aids to devotion. We see some gesticulate wildly before a picture or statue; we see them clutch convulsively, or shower with kisses medal or pocket statues so that at times they are accused of regarding these things as worthy of honor in themselves. They are actually at the time unmindful of the material lifeless thing they hold or see, but are carried by their warmth of heart and imagination until they see this very person. We all feel the same thing when we gaze on the picture of an absent or dead friend or relative. When the Liberty Bell was taken into city after city a reverent throng did homage to the spirit that called it into being by approaching it and kissing it. They were not charged with thinking it possessed virtue, or regarding it as a thing in itself

worthy of homage. What a patriot does to the things that mean country, that the Catholic does to the things that mean God and religion. Flag means country; the Cross means religion. The graves in national cemeteries contain the mortal remains of known and unknown heroes; to them we make pilgrimages that their memory may be blessed, their spirit emulated, and their remains held sacred. We make pilgrimages in fancy to the graves of God's heroes, there to kneel that we may catch up some of the same fire, that we may honor by our presence the perishable body with which they wrought the victory over self and the world. A country and its citizens feel bound to keep alive the memory of those who did well for country; we do that for those who did well for God.

How many are they who to-day place high value on the flags that the boys in khaki carried to victory; how coveted is that which was worn or used by some dead hero! Praiseworthy is the motive of it all. And so with the relics of the Saints. In themselves worthless, they are priceless on account of association. In paying this tribute to the relic of some Saint we are in complete harmony with examples afforded by holy Scripture. In 4 Kings xiii. 21 we see that God gave to the bones of the dead prophet Eliseus the power of restoring life. We are all familiar with the example of the woman in the Gospel whose faith in Christ was so strong that she wished only to touch the hem of His garment to be healed. (Matt. x. 21.) We are reminded that Christ gave His successors wonderful power by the display made by St. Peter when his very shadow cured the sick (Acts v. 15); or when to anything St. Paul used, handkerchief or clothing, God gave the power to cure (Acts xix. 12).

Whatever is consecrated to God is certainly to be respected. Failure to respect is a sin against God. Whoever profanes a thing set aside for the worship of God, whether it is a person, a place, an office, or an object used in worship, is guilty of sacrilege. To try to obtain by unholy means, such as bribery or promise of some unworthy reward, a position or anything that is sacred, is an attack on the reverence we should exhibit towards everything that pertains to divine worship.

DEVIL WORSHIP

There are many misguided people who in their morbid curiosity to know what is neither necessary for their happiness nor conducive to their peace of mind will fall into gross sin. Some will openly avow allegiance with the spirit of evil, promising blind obedience. Others will acknowledge a readiness to pay, with service of every kind required, anyone or anything who will grant a favor desired here and now. There is implied the threat, "If God will not and the devil will; him will I serve." Other forms of this are consulting fortune tellers, as if anyone but God controls the future or can read it. Belief in, or the use of charms or omens is an attack on the sovereignty of God. It implies that there are things beyond His control or outside of His providence, that there is such a thing as fate, blind fate. To advise one to use any of these things; to recommend consulting fortune tellers, mediums or clairvoyants; to fail to do what we can do to check these practices makes us guilty of the sin of superstition.

A most subtle form of devil worship seemed for a while to be sweeping the land, spiritism. The desire "to know" that was back of the first fall threatened to lead many into virtual denial of the worship of God. People were not content to talk with God or His angels or His saints with those whose character and influence are known. They must appeal to the unknown; the mysterious. To point out to these that not one truth that has been an inspiration to mankind, not one solution of the many ills that trouble it, not one movement for its betterment had ever come from spirit worship, had no effect. Because it was weird, it was worthy; because by them it could not be explained, it was right. They who would commune with spirits, have the saints, the heavenly choir, the Blessed Mother, God Himself, to converse with.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Hardly less insidious is the so-called Christian Science which supplants with a book written by a fallible woman the infallible voice of God's Church; which while alleging that it intensi-

fies Faith, destroys it, and while apparently Christian, repudiates the teachings of Christ. Not what the Bible says, but what "Science and Health" teaches is the real rule of faith; not what Christ taught, but what this woman promulgated is doctrine. The Trinity is rejected; the Redemption is repudiated because there is no sin; man is not a creature but coeternal with God. Christian Science is paganism run riot, the worship of a woman. Who could insist more on the necessity of Faith than the Church or on the efficacy of prayer. Of the first she says, "without it we cannot please God," and of the second that is all powerful, for Christ so promised, "If you ask the Father anything in my name He will grant it."

HOW TO WORSHIP

One may sin against the First Commandment by the method he uses in worshipping God. There is but one God and He approved one cult. That we must follow. The soul of religion is seen in its ceremony and observances; by them we become part of the very religion they represent. Sometimes curiosity leads one to visit a place of false worship and then a desire not to be conspicuous prompts this same person to do what the others present do and sin is committed. A false notion of friendship will be the reason for somebody else in visiting a synagogue or Protestant church. God is the Friend of Friends and loyalty to His religion keeps one from offending Him by worshipping in a manner forbidden. It is indeed permissible to enter a place of false worship like synagogue or Protestant church at the time of a funeral or marriage, but one should so conduct himself then that he will be recognized as a spectator or witness and not identified as a worshipper. Visits of this kind should be few.

CHAIN PRAYER

A sort of false worship may insinuate itself into certain seeming Catholic Practices. From time to time wonderful blessings are promised if a certain prayer be said by oneself and copied and sent to others with instruction to imitate.

Frightful penalties await the one who fails. A craven fear urges what common sense rejects. It is this fear which is really worshipped or at least an effort is made to placate it.

SINFUL USE OF SACRAMENTALS

A big stumbling block in the way of many an inquirer into the Catholic Faith is the attitude of some misguided Catholics to some sacramental or some devotion. To assert that the mere wearing of the scapulars, the carrying of the Rosary, the constant possession of a pocket crucifix precludes the possibility of accident or physical harm is to bring religion to ridicule and to attribute to these things a power they do not possess. It is not the use of them but the kind of life they lead, who use them, which gives to them their effectiveness. It is the Faith stimulating action which is blessed by God. To believe that any prayers, or a series of communions, say on nine consecutive First Fridays means the salvation of one's soul is in truth another form of superstition. Not what has been done so much as what is being done brings salvation. The prayer and communion that inspire to virtuous action is what saves.

When we look around us to-day to find how few are really blessed by God with that priceless gift, the light of faith, and when we remember how good and saintly are some to whom God has not yet given this boon we should be ceaseless in our giving thanks for it. May gratitude invoke in us a thirst for the knowledge of all which Faith teaches and worship requires so that we may be to others a proof of what Faith really means. Let us be most exact in giving God the honor to which He is entitled and in giving it in that way only which He desires and equally as quick and careful not to offend Him by taking part in any man-made religion or in its worship. Let us steel ourselves against the most subtle and insidious of all forms of paganism: the worship of money, of position, of pleasure, of earthly honor. With sorrow must we admit that not a few in our day make their religion and its practice—and that means God, and His worship—wait upon or become secondary to the making of money, the obtaining of possessions, the duties of society. They are

indeed gods of clay. "Let us turn from them to serve the living and true God."

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SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

SUBJECT

THE VICE OF GLUTTONY

TEXT

Everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one.—1 Cor. ix. 25.

Analysis

Introduction. The city of Corinth in the time of St. Paul was noted for its wealth, luxury, and the dissolute morals of its inhabitants. There the famous Isthmian games were held every two years, for which the athletes, in spite of temptations on every side, used to train themselves most severely, denying themselves every indulgence that could prevent their gaining the prize that was awarded the winner.

In to-day's Epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle is reminding the Christians of the self-denial and restraint practiced by those athletes for the sake of the corruptible crown that constituted the prize of their physical skill; and he says, if these men do so much to win a reward that turns to dust, how much more should the Christian refrain from over indulgence and gratification in order to gain a crown that fades not away! And to show his

readers the necessity of restraint and self-denial, he further tells them that he himself finds it needful to chastize his own body, thus bringing it into subjection, lest while preaching to others he should become a castaway. If the great Apostle of the Gentiles found it necessary to deny himself and to practice bodily austerities, what is to be thought of those Christians who far from practicing mortification are given to gluttony and all kinds of self-gratification? We will speak of the sin of gluttony to-day.

I. **The meaning of gluttony.** 1. Temperance is a virtue which requires moderation and restraint of the sensible appetite. The vices opposed to this virtue are *gluttony* and *impurity*. (For Impurity, see First Sunday of Advent and Third Sunday of Lent.) 2. Gluttony means excess in eating or drinking. It is one of the capital vices, because it is not only sinful in itself, but causes other sins. 3. It is not gluttonous to find pleasure in eating and drinking, since it is God Himself who has given food and drink the property of pleasing the palate; but it is gluttonous to eat and drink solely for the sensible pleasure to be gained therefrom. 4. Gluttony is committed in the following ways: (a) by immoderate attachment to food and drink, *i.e.*, by over anxiety about one's meals, by eating and drinking in a ravenous manner, by eating too frequently, or without necessity; (b) by taking too much food or drink; (c) by excessive daintiness in the choice or preparation of food.

II. **The malice of gluttony.** 1. This vice is a mortal sin in the following cases: (a) when one so makes a god of his belly as to find all his happiness in the pleasures of the table; (b) when one seriously injures his health by gorging himself; (c) when for the sake of indulging his palate one violates the laws of fasting and abstinence; (d) when a person squanders his income and substance for the purpose of needlessly indulging his palate; (e) when by overloading his stomach a person is unfitted for the performance of his regular duties. 2. Whenever the excess in eating and drinking is not grave, gluttony does not go beyond a venial sin. 3. Bad consequences of

gluttony are: (a) stupidity of mind, because food and drink taken in excess react on the brain, confusing and obscuring the mind, or taking away, in whole or in part, the use of the reason, as in drunkenness; (b) incapacity, incompetence and indolence in the management of one's affairs and ordinary duties; (c) impurity, because indulgence of the palate stimulates concupiscence and the passions; (d) poverty and want; (e) various diseases of the body and shortness of life (Ecclus. xxxvii. 33, 34).

Conclusion. 1. In order to practice temperance and sobriety the following means should be adopted: (a) we should shun the persons, places, and things that occasion excess in eating or drinking (Prov. xxiii. 20). 2. We should remember that frugality and moderation preserve us from many ills of body and soul. 3. To be moderate in greater matters, let us be moderate in small things. 4. Let us frequently call to mind the examples of self-denial and mortification afforded by the lives of our Lord, St. Paul, and all the saints.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Fifth Sunday after Easter, and Fourth Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermons

Run, that You may Obtain

BY DOM BEDE CAMM, O.S.B., B.A.

So run that you may obtain.—1 Cor. ix. 24.

INTRODUCTION

The great Apostle of the Gentiles was writing to his Corinthian converts. Corinth was then such a by-word even among the heathen for luxury and profligacy, that to become Corinthianized was a synonym for being morally corrupted.

"The Orient," says Fouard, "brought thither its perverse and shameful passions, Rome its pitiless brutality and bloody sports."

The temple of Venus, with its thousand priestesses, was a source of moral degradation unequaled in the black annals of pagan vice. To newly-converted Christians living among such a population, familiarized from childhood with such unspeakable sights and associations, it was necessary above all to preach self-restraint, bodily mortification, and austere penance. Only thus could they preserve themselves from the contagion of vicious example, only thus could they hope to keep themselves unspotted from the world. Many of them had been snatched out of the fire, brands plucked from the burning, as the Apostle reminds them—they had been "fornicators, idolators, adulterers, shamefully effeminate, unclean, thieves, misers, drunkards, railers, spoilers of others' goods" (1 Cor. vi. 9, 11), and if they were to remain true to the pure and lofty tenets of their new faith, they must learn thus early to "chastise their bodies and bring them into subjection."

And in order to bring the lesson home to them with fullest possible force, the great Apostle uses an illustration which was familiar to them all. At Corinth were held every second year the famous Isthmian games, in which athletes from the whole Roman empire contended for the mastery. He reminds them of the training to which those young men voluntarily subjected themselves in order that they might gain the prize and the glory it brought with it. And yet this prize so eagerly sought after was but a crown of parsley!

"Do you not know," he says, "that those who run in the stadium (or race course) all run, but only one gains the prize? So run, that you may obtain! And every man who striveth in the contest abstains from all things: but they do it that they may gain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."

The metaphor so familiar to the Corinthians is not less so to ourselves. It appeals to the modern Englishman or American, with his devotion to athletics, as forcibly as to the ancient Greek. Many of us have known by experience the discipline imposed on those who are training for a race, and there are few young men among us to whom the words of Epictetus will not go home: "Would you be a victor in the Olympic games? So indeed would I, for it is a glorious thing; but consider what must precede—and follow, and so enter on the contest. You must live by rule,

on spare diet, without delicacies, take exercise at the appointed hour, in heat and in cold, and abstain from wine and cold drinks; in short, you must obey the trainer as you do your physician."

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, A CONTEST

It was natural, then, that St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians should apply so familiar an illustration to the Christian life, in order to enforce on his converts the need of self-discipline. He bids them go back in memory to the exciting days of the games, to see the runners, stripped of their flowing clothes, running with nerves alert, muscles on the stretch, loins girt, bodies glistening with oil, eyes fixed on the goal—the one purpose absorbing all other thoughts—to get there first and win the longed-for crown. Only one could win it, and therefore each must strive his hardest. Only one, and yet it was so ardently desired by all! And then he turns with a rapid transition to his hearers—"So run, that you may win"—"So run"—run, that is, not less earnestly or with less effort than if the crown was reserved for only one of you. Run! with the one purpose before you, with eyes fixed on the heavenly goal, not looking aside to the right hand or the left, still less glancing back, for that would be fatal. Run! stripped of those clinging garments of old habits and sensual indulgence, of earthly attachments and worldly desires, run, with your loins girded, with your whole souls intent on the prize, so run that you may obtain!

Yes, as if only one of you could win it! For so it really is. We are not running in this race one against the other, but each of us is engaged in a match against time. It is a feat of endurance that is demanded of us, a contest in which a moment's repose may be fatal. There must be no turning aside for rest and refreshment; if we have not reached the goal when the bell rings for us, we shall never reach it at all.

"I therefore so run not as uncertainly," continues the saint. That is to say, I run, not wandering about the course, zigzag from side to side, but straight as an arrow from the bow, with eyes fixed steadily on the goal.

The well-known fable of Atalanta's apple may well have been in the Apostle's mind. The matchless maid whose speed could be

equaled by no mortal competitor, lost the race through turning aside to pick up the golden apple cunningly thrown in her way.

However this may be, the fable strikingly brings home the moral which St. Paul is here enforcing: "Beware, as I do," he seems to say, "beware of turning aside after the alluring pleasures of this world, those glittering baits which the devil is ever throwing on your path. Let them not entice you from your end, that goal to which you should be speeding, that crown which is laid up for you there. If I myself cannot afford to despise these precautions, can you safely do so?"

And then he turns to another well-known feature of the national sports—the boxing match. "So fight I," he cries, "not as one that beateth the air." Remember you have to engage in a hand to hand conflict with a powerful and cunning antagonist, one who is an expert in fighting, who is quick, resourceful, strong beyond all human possibility. Remember that this fight is no mimic contest, but one on which the issues of life and death depend. Our foe is a deadly one, he has craft, experience, and force on his side, and if we neglect any means of winning, we shall most surely be overcome. We must waste no blows on the air. Each must be aimed deliberately and struck home.

MORTIFICATION A MEANS TOWARDS VICTORY

If, then, we are engaged in this race, in this contest, how are we to insure victory? St. Paul goes on to tell us. After the grace of God and the sacraments, which are its principal channels, there are no means so powerful and so sure as those which he recommends. "Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things." "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection" (1 Cor. ix. 25, 27).

The means, in a word, are self-discipline, mortification.

My brethren, these are not popular means, especially in these degenerate days. The world has done its best to teach us to despise asceticism as the morbid product of medieval monasticism, and the many forms of heresy which surround us agree only in this, that they flout the very idea of mortification or self-denial. Even Catholics have too often become impregnated with this fatal error. As Lent approaches it becomes their preoccupation to dis-

cover a plausible pretext for getting dispensed, or for dispensing themselves, from the Church's law of fasting and abstinence.

The sterner side of Christian teaching is abhorrent to these "easy-chair Catholics." If they cannot reach heaven on a feather-bed, they are not sure whether it is worth the trouble of reaching at all. Fasting seems to have almost disappeared, except from the cloister, and even good Catholics think that they are keeping an exemplary Lent if they abstain twice in the week instead of only once, as at other times.

As to those austere instruments of Christian penance, the discipline, the hair shirt, and the like, they have almost disappeared. They are, indeed, all but forgotten, or if perchance they are mentioned it is with a sneer and a smile of pity or with the shudder of intolerable disgust. They were once the weapons of Christian perfection, they have become the symbols of an irrational fanaticism.

To the thoughtful observer there are few signs of the times more deplorable than this almost universal self-indulgence, this cowardice which, while it shrinks in horror from the cross, seeks to disguise itself under the specious liveries of enlightenment, this shallow, ungenerous levity which would eliminate penance from the teaching of the Crucified.

And surely there is no delusion more fatal or more unchristian. The words of our blessed Lord remain unchanged: "Except ye do penance ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 5). "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. xvi. 24). He has made no new conditions for our age, and if we reject His teaching it must be at our own peril.

And here we find the Apostle driving home to the hearts and consciences of his converts the same solemn warning. His words could not well be stronger. The force of the original Greek would seem to be: "I bruise my body and make a slave of it."

And it is thus the saints have ever understood him. "If we do not treat our bodies thus," they said, "the flesh will become our master, and then we are lost." It was this thought that drove the angelic Aloysius from his soft bed and kept him kneeling on the stones, upright and motionless, for hour upon hour, of the cold night. This was the impulse which made the noble boy Benedict

of Nursia strip himself of his clothing and roll himself naked among the thorns of Subiaco. This truth inspired virgins like the seraphic St. Teresa and sweet St. Rose of Lima to inflict on their innocent bodies tortures from which strong men would have shrunk, and it drove saints like Antony, Jerome, and Bruno out into the desert to live among wild beasts. Fired by this thought Francis of Assisi flung himself into the snowdrifts. Patrick and Wilfrid and a host of others stood for long hours plunged in icy water. Elizabeth, a tenderly nurtured queen, bared her back to the scourge, Bernard and Catharine of Siena, and thousands like them, denied themselves all pleasant food, to fast on bread and water.

It is indeed a universal law. Never will you find a canonized saint who has not thus afflicted his body and brought it into subjection. The gentle St. Francis of Sales was wont to discipline himself to blood; the more modern saints have rivaled in holy emulation the penances of the more ancient, and in vain will the cowardly and self-indulgent Christian of our day search for a heavenly patron under whose example he may shelter himself. Let us take yet one striking instance. Who among the noble army of martyrs is so modern in every sense of the word as blessed Thomas More? A man of the world, a learned and acute lawyer, the favorite of kings and princes, a witty writer and conversationalist, an accomplished courtier, a devoted father and husband, where will you find the secret which made him abandon all things, resign his lofty position as Lord High Chancellor of England, tear himself away from the embraces of his loved ones, quit the noble house he had built for himself, and, in exchange for all the world holds dear, embrace suffering, imprisonment, and a cruel death? "It was his faith," you say; but how did he keep that faith so bright?

"It was his love of God." But how did he learn to prefer that love to all the ties of earth?

See him sitting one day in his garden by the river side, gaily chatting and laughing with his loved ones. The heat of the weather has made him lay his gown aside, and an unguarded movement exposes to view a glimpse of the rough hair shirt which he ever wears under his velvet doublet. A light-hearted daughter,

whose quick eyes have espied it, laughs at the sight. But, my brethren, be sure that the angels reverenced it. For it was by thus disciplining the flesh by the hidden shirt of hair and frequent scourging, even from the days of youth, that the Lord High Chancellor of England learned to keep his body in subjection, to wean his heart from all the joys of earth, and thus prepare himself when the day of trial came to embrace his Master's cross and gain the martyr's palm.

In a word, the lives of all the saints teach us the lesson that St. Paul lays down to-day. It would be as foolish for us to say we could do without bodily mortification as for a modern athlete to despise training. That is as necessary now for him as it was for his forerunners at the Isthmian Games; the asceticism which was practiced by the saints cannot be altogether neglected now without most grievous peril to our souls. Just as it would have been utterly useless to go to the stadium without the preliminary training, so it is useless for us to engage in our life's contest if we do not train the body—if we allow the muscles of our souls to get soft and slack by self-indulgence.

It is useless for us to think that we can confine ourselves to restraining the unlawful cravings of the flesh; for if we habitually yield to the flesh in all that is not manifestly sinful, we shall find ourselves so weakened that, sooner or later, when a fierce assault is made, our defenses will give way and we shall shamefully yield. We must accustom ourselves not to give our bodies all they crave for as regards food, sleep, and the like, lest before we know it we find we have sold ourselves into a miserable slavery, and that we can refuse our tyrant nothing.

CONCLUSION

The holy season of Lent is now fast approaching. The purple vestments of priest and altar warn us of its coming and bid us prepare ourselves to keep it worthily. We are urged to give ourselves to works of penance:

> And while the sword in Mary's breast
> Is driven home, we hide,
> Each in our hearts, and count the wounds
> Of passion and of pride.

Let us make this holy season a real time of training. It has been provided by the wisdom of holy Mother Church for this very object. Now, if ever, are we to set ourselves in real earnest to follow the apostolic example, "to chastise our bodies and bring them into subjection."

But we are so cowardly, so ungenerous, that we are apt to make our very weakness an excuse for doing nothing. The example of the saints is too high for us, the very thought of their austerities frightens us, and we so easily persuade ourselves that it is all beyond our strength.

And, indeed, there can be no doubt that we are, most of us, at present incapable of following very closely in their footsteps. Nor does God ask it of us now. It was His grace alone which gave strength to those glorious servants of His in their ceaseless unrelenting battle against their own flesh.

He asks of us in general only some light and easy mortifications, penances that will not injure our healths, or prevent us doing the work that He has given us to do. But He does ask, and He does expect, that each of us should, in the sanctuary of his own heart, examine himself as to what he can and ought to bear, what he can and ought to give up. Each soul must resolve on the sacrifices which God inspires it to make, and even then carry them out only after consultation with a prudent confessor.

But the general laws of the Church, the fasting and abstinence rendered so easy by multiplied dispensations, surely there should be few who need excuse from them! And if our occupations or our weakness do render the fasting impossible (and we should beware of too easily assuming this without due trial and experience), let us be careful not to dispense ourselves, but to ask of God's representatives to prescribe in its place some other mortifications which are not beyond our strength.

How many Catholics there are who come to confession at Easter and calmly tell their confessors that on their own authority they have not fasted all Lent, and then think that they have put all right again. How deplorable is this levity in dealing with the Church's sacred laws. We can all of us resolve to mortify our bodies in ways that will not injure, but rather improve our health. Let us resolve this Lent to mortify our sloth, either by rising

earlier than our usual hour in order to gain a few minutes extra for prayer, or at least by rising promptly at the appointed hour. Cardinal Newman once said that promptness in rising was a notable sign of perfection, and in this he was but echoing the witness of all spiritual writers. Nothing so weakens our moral fiber as those few minutes of needless self-indulgence at the beginning of the day. The first-fruits of our day belong to God, and He should not be defrauded of His rights. If we can thus get time to assist at daily Mass, we shall thereby give God glory and gain infinite benefits for our own souls. How many of us need to take to heart St. Philip's solemn words: "In order to begin the day well and to end it better, it is necessary to hear Mass *every day.*"

Again, even if we cannot fast, in how many ways can we not mortify our taste? We may abstain altogether from some favorite dish, or what is perhaps even harder, only take a small portion of what we like best. Again a man may give up smoking, a woman some other favorite indulgence. If we made the resolution that whenever we sat down to a meal we would mortify our taste in some little thing, we should make great progress in Christian asceticism. Again, we may most profitably mortify our curiosity. How much time we waste over profitless, if not harmful, reading —newspapers, novels, and magazines! What, if some of this time were regularly devoted to the reading of some spiritual book? Time, too, that would otherwise be spent in useless reading or amusement could be profitably devoted to some work of charity, to make garments for poor children and the like. The tongue might well be mortified to our own great profit and that of our neighbor also. A certain time given to silence and retirement instead of to vain gossip and idle conversation would be very pleasing to God. In a hundred other ways, which will easily suggest themselves to any devout and earnest soul, we may make this holy time a season of spiritual profit, a very harvest-time of merit.

"Grace is very plentiful in Lent," says Father Faber; how happy shall we be if we make use of the divine riches thus laid so abundantly at our disposal!

Those athletes of old, as St. Paul reminds us, toiled and suf-

fered so much to gain a corruptible crown—a mere wreath of parsley or bay, which quickly faded. "But we the incorruptible." Ah, let the thought of that crown in heaven spur us on to renewed efforts, to unceasing struggles! It is reserved for you and me. Christ our King is waiting at the goal to crown us, amid the plaudits of that great crowd of witnesses, the blessed saints and angels, who are witnessing the contest with such breathless and eager anxiety.

The applause of the spectators at the Isthmian Games rang like music in the ears of the glad winners. What will be to us the sweetness of the joyous congratulations of the hosts of the blessed, nay of those wondrous words of welcome with which the King Himself shall greet us: "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" "So run that you may obtain."

The Sin of Gluttony

BY THE REV. WM. P. BARR, C.M.

I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others I myself should be a castaway.—1 Cor. ix. 27.

INTRODUCTION

The concluding words of the Gospel you have just heard are calculated to strike terror into the soul. They bring us face to face with the great mystery of predestination, a mystery concerning which we fain would know much, yet in reality know so little. Will I be saved? Will I be numbered among those who see God, or will I be cast out forever from His entrancing Presence? Who has not felt the temptation to speculate on these questions? Nevertheless we know full well that mere speculation is vain; for in the end the answer rests with ourselves. The Church teaches us that we are free moral agents; she teaches us, moreover, that God will condemn no one who rightly uses his free will. If we are saved it will be because we have corresponded with God's grace; if we are damned it will be because we have, by sin, abused the gift of free will.

By the virtue of hope we are prompted to trust that God will furnish us with the means to attain our eternal destiny; this virtue,

however, does not preclude a certain fear of our improper correspondence with God's gracious assistance; rather we should say an element of fear is a necessary condition thereof, since it compels us to undertake the task of self-discipline, without which hope degenerates into vain presumption.

If ever anyone possessed certain marks of predestination it was St. Paul. His conversion was the effect of a very special grace; he was chosen for an extraordinary mission—to bear the name of Christ before the Gentiles. Consumed with zeal he deemed no labor too arduous, no peril too great, provided only Christ were preached. He himself describes in eloquent terms what things God caused him to suffer for His name's sake. Surely there must have gone with such heroic surrender to grace a conviction that he was destined to receive "the crown of Life." But despite his divine election and his rapt vision of the third heaven he was yet fearful lest having preached salvation to others he himself should become a castaway.

Now what effect did this fear produce in St. Paul? It led him to strike at the root of sin—his body. He knew the force of concupiscence, and in order to restrain its evil tendencies he chastized his body to bring it under subjection. Such, too, my dear brethren, must be the character of our trust in God's grace. It should move us to enter into that struggle which the Apostle describes in to-day's lesson—a struggle wherein victory means everlasting life, and defeat means eternal separation from God.

To-day holy Church begins her remote preparation for the hallowed season of Lent. In accordance with her traditions she will prescribe that fast which she regards as one of her most sacred institutions. And why? Because it keeps before our minds the fundamental truth that unless our appetite is repressed our animal nature will assert itself and gain the mastery over our whole being. Philosophers would have us believe that the instincts of our nature all tend upwards; in proof whereof they allege the progress of the race from a state of brute nature to its present civilization. Though refusing to grant their arguments, we will admit a latent craving for higher things. All of us, at times, feel the force of St. Augustine's cry: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee!"

Still the truth is forced upon us by daily experience that there are likewise in our nature, gross, animal instincts spontaneously asserting themselves, which, unless we check, will inevitably drag us down to the level of the beast.

NATURE OF THE VICE OF GLUTTONY

Now, among the many low tendencies which we share in common with the brute creation, none, perhaps, is so urgent, so domineering, so insatiable as the instinct of hunger, the craving for food and drink. Hence it is just here precisely that Christian mortification must begin if it is to be anything worth. Wisely, therefore, does holy Church legislate for the Lenten fast; wisely does she set up her standard against that most ancient form of idolatry, abominable as it is ancient, the making a god of the belly. In keeping with the spirit of the Lenten season, and in order to draw profit to our souls, as well, let us direct our attention to a scrutiny of the sin of gluttony.

Gluttony is defined by St. Thomas as an inordinate indulgence in the pleasure derived from eating and drinking. It has its root in an instinct of self-preservation which is implanted in us by the Creator, and which, in consequence, is essentially good. Man is obliged by the law of nature and by the divine positive law as well, to preserve the life of which he is not sole or supreme master; and as it would be a grave violation of this law to take one's own life, so would it be equally grave to place with deliberate intention any act tending indirectly to destroy or to notably shorten it. And since man is not a pure spirit, but is composed of a rational soul and an organism subject to decay, it follows that unless he build up by nurture his diminished vital power, death must inevitably ensue. Therefore to partake of a certain amount of food and drink is not only lawful but is likewise a sacred duty imposed by God Himself.

Moreover, since an all-wise Creator has endowed us with a sense of taste; since He has given to the food and drink of which we partake a certain savour or relish; and since He has done this to the end that man might the more readily discharge his obligation of preserving his life, it follows evidently that

one may legitimately enjoy the pleasure derived from eating and drinking. To affirm the contrary were tantamount to accusing God of exposing the whole human race to the danger, nay, humanly speaking, the necessity, of sinning, an accusation as absurd as it is blasphemous.

But here as with the other appetites when reason ceases to be the guide, when the pleasure of eating and drinking is sought for its own sake and is made an end in itself; when, to use the forcible language of the Apostle, one begins "to make a god of his belly," at that point the appetite degenerates into gluttony and we surrender to one of the seven deadly sins. Nor is this simply a conclusion of rational philosophy; it is a truth supported by the authority of holy Church who has condemned the proposition affirming that to seek the pleasure derived from eating and drinking for its own sake is not sinful.

Now of course few men—unless they are confirmed Epicureans—will be ready to admit that they seek the pleasure for its own sake; and it is a notorious fact that while men and women readily confess to sins of a spiritual character, they refuse to admit to themselves, much less to others, that they ever fall into the base sin of gluttony. But, alas! here as elsewhere man is subject to delusion, and if their motives were analyzed it would be found that very many persons, sometimes even those making pretense of great spiritual attainments, really do surrender to this base sin.

The delusion arises from an erroneous belief that the sin of gluttony is committed only when one eats and drinks to excess and to such extent as to impair one's bodily health. Now I readily admit that this is the gravest form of the sin; but I feel in duty bound to impress upon you that one can fail, and sometimes gravely, in a variety of other ways. For instance, it is gluttony to allow the thought of one's food and drink to so engross the mind as to interfere with the more serious affairs of life. It might seem at first that this is an impossible case; but if "from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," are we not forced to believe that men and women whose conversational power seems limited to the discussion

of their meals and who on this topic wax really eloquent, regard food and drink as the supreme concern of life?

Again one may commit the sin of gluttony by anticipating, without necessity, the time of repast, or by frequently indulging in food or drink between meals. This form of gluttony is peculiar to children, though I may add in passing, that children of a larger growth are not entirely exempt therefrom. This consideration is of far more importance than one might at first imagine. In the child habits are in process of formation; and it is the solemn duty of parents to give these habits the right bent and direction. The child that is never taught the lesson of self-restraint, but is permitted to indulge its appetite whenever and wherever it please, will contract a habit of intemperance that in after-life will prove disastrous. Parents sometimes wonder how and where their sons contracted the terrible habit of drink. They say confidently that it was never at home. But are they quite sure? It may be that intoxicating liquor never entered the home. But let them remember that the drink habit is only a particular manifestation of the general habit of intemperance, and their children not having learned the lesson of temperance, required only an occasion, an occasion, alas! that only too frequently presents itself, and then follows the awful fall. It would indeed be criminal for parents out of a spirit of parsimony to deny their little ones necessary nurture, but it is far more criminal to foster the habit of intemperance. And I will add that when you deny their reasonable cravings, let them know why; again and again impress upon their young minds that you are consulting for their future welfare. Point out to them the disastrous consequences that follow from intemperance, and I assure you that this lesson taught them in youth will be among the most precious legacies you could bequeath to them.

GRAVITY OF THIS VICE

Now, I need scarcely remark that these forms of gluttony are not ordinarily more than light or venial sins; it remains, therefore, to determine when a sin of gluttony is mortal. Theologians set forth three cases. First, when one, by intemperance in eating

or drinking, comes to violate a grave precept of God or of His Church. In virtue of that legislative power invested in her by her Divine Founder, Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church has enacted a law imposing on all her subjects the study of abstaining from flesh meat and of fasting on certain days and seasons of the year. And this law obliges in conscience and under pain of mortal sin. Whosoever therefore sacrifices this law to his appetite is guilty of a grave deordination, since he sacrifices the higher spiritual interest of his soul to his carnal appetite. Whence it follows that he is guilty not only of the sin of disobedience, but also of the additional sin of gluttony.

The second case is where one indulges his appetite to such an extent as to infringe the rights of others. We hear a great deal nowadays of the high cost of living, but it has been well said that we might profitably turn our attention to the cost of high living. And while extravagance in regard to the table is only a particular phase of the general vice, it is a notorious fact that very many people are living beyond their means. And what is the result? One of two things: if the man is honest he will live from hand to mouth and contract unnecessary debts in the hope, of course, of meeting them in the future. Then, when sickness or old age overtakes him, he leaves his wife and family all unprovided for, perhaps hampered with heavy debts. You cannot deny that this is a familiar case. Or if the man be dishonest he will seek to meet the demands of his extravagance by gambling with the little income that is his, and when this fails, as it nearly always does, he has recourse to open dishonesty. What is the meaning of so many cases of embezzlement and defalcation, of which each day's paper furnishes an example? The trial nearly always reveals the story of a man living beyond his means.

The third case is when a man by his intemperance seriously impairs his bodily health or impedes the use of reason. This brings me to a point whereon I fain would dwell at greater length did the scope of this sermon permit, because it is the most ordinary, the most grave, the most disastrous form of intemperance—I allude to the excessive use of intoxicating beverages, or in plain language, drunkenness. In quality both

of Catholic priest and American citizen, I see the dire consequences with which this terrible habit is always fraught; as priest I see the gates of hell yawning wide open to swallow down teeming millions of intemperate souls, souls crimsoned by the redeeming Blood of Jesus Christ, souls destined to glorify God forever in heaven did they not fall victims to the demon of liquor. As an American I cannot but cherish with liveliest interest the welfare of our glorious country, yet I behold in this accursed vice of drunkenness, as it were a monster, gnawing at her very vitals and threatening her ultimate ruin. History all too truly bears witness to the fact that the decay of dynasties and empires has ever been ushered in by moral corruption, which in turn invariably has been the result of vicious intemperance.

But how direful are the effects of this sin upon the souls of its victims! The essential malice of drunkenness lies in the opposition it bears to the Triune Godhead, to God the Father as Creator, to God the Son as Redeemer, to God the Holy Ghost as Sanctifier of souls. It is quite true, every sin a man commits tends, in varying degree of gravity, to outrage the Most Holy Trinity; but the sin of drunkenness offers a peculiar affront to God, wholly unlike that of any other sin, in that it snatches the soul from out the scope of the operation of grace, by robbing its victim of reason and free will, and renders futile the saving merits of Christ's passion. The drunken person can do nothing toward his repentance; more, he has effected—with utter reverence we say it—that God Himself cannot aid him. God the Father looking upon such a soul views His image and likeness temporarily obliterated; God the Son views the humanity He deigned to assume "for us men and our salvation" degraded, His precious Blood trampled upon; God the Holy Ghost views the staggering body once His living tabernacle, now the abode of foulest demons. Behold to what lengths the sin of intemperance can run! Behold what a hellish monster lurks in the innocent dram of rum or the goblet of sparkling wine. Manifestly of all the sins of gluttony, the drinking to intoxication is the most grave, the most to be abhorred and shunned. St. Peter assures us that "the devil

goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," but nowhere, doubtless, does he more surely secure his prey than by the lure of intoxicating beverages.

CONCLUSION

And so I would urge on men in particular this species of penance for the Lenten season, namely, to abstain from all intoxicants in honor of that torment of thirst which Christ endured on the Cross, a torment so extreme that it wrung from Him who was supreme patience the piteous cry: "I thirst!" Men often allege, and truly, that the exhausting nature of their daily work quite forbids their keeping the Lenten fast; but who will say that his labor requires his use of intoxicants. Indeed nowadays many firms and railroads rule that their employees refrain from liquor of every sort. And it may be that such a resolution, taken for the Lenten time only, may endure; perhaps even strengthen into a habit that may prove one of life's best blessings as well by the power it gives the individual over himself as by the good example rendered the neighbor. There is a strong movement, to-day, in our country, against the curse of intemperance, and Catholics should have themselves well to the front in the enterprise. A sane and sensible trend against intemperance certainly should form a part of every lay apostolate. For if we owe a duty to ourselves in point of temperate living, no less do we owe it to our neighbor, whom we are bidden to love as ourselves. In conclusion, then, I would call upon you in the name of all that is most holy and sacred, in the name of Church and country and of all that both the one and the other stand for, I would call upon you as Catholic American citizens to use all the strength and influence that God has given you to shun in your own lives and to destroy from off the face of the earth the accursed demon of intemperance.

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SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

SUBJECT

FASTING AND ABSTINENCE: THEIR ADVANTAGES

TEXT

In hunger and thirst, in fastings often.—2 Cor. xi. 27.

Analysis

Introduction. In the flourishing Church at Corinth, which St. Paul had founded on his second missionary journey, there sprang up an opposing faction which wished to destroy the authority of the Apostle, and went so far as to maintain that he was not an Apostle at all. In writing this letter to the Corinthians St. Paul desired among other things to refute these Judaizing opponents, and to this end he reviewed some of the miracles that had been wrought in confirmation of his preaching and Apostolate, and the many sufferings and sacrifices he had borne on behalf of his exalted office. He mentions as one of his trials that he fasted often; and we can be sure that, whether this was done out of choice or from necessity, the great Apostle was glad and happy to have this most useful means of proving his love for Christ and his loyalty to the Gospel. St. Paul, far from complaining of his fasting, of his hunger and thirst, is here speaking of it with great satisfaction, as of something highly laudable, for he realized the merit and advantages it had for him. There is likewise for us much merit

and great advantages in fasting and abstinence if these salutary practices be observed in the proper manner and spirit. What these benefits are we shall now consider.

I. Fasting mortifies the flesh. 1. One of the greatest enemies of our soul is the flesh, *i.e.*, the unruly inclinations of the lower passions of our nature. But these evil tendencies are immensely intensified by over indulgence in food and drink. One of the surest means, therefore, of subduing the rebellion of our lower nature is the employment of fasting and abstinence (Matt. xvii. 20). As a fractious horse is tamed by less food, so are our passions. 2. Many persons fear that fasting will ruin their health; but medical men and experience testify that fasting is very often the best thing for bodily health. This is evident from the clearness of mind and memory so often experienced by persons of abstemious habits, and by the advanced age attained by those generally who have led simple and austere lives.

II. Fasting satisfies for sin. 1. Every sin deserves a punishment from God which must be borne, either in time, or in eternity. 2. Among the means which are best suited to satisfy for sin are fasting and abstinence, as we know from Scripture. It was fasting that many times saved the Israelites from the anger of God; it was fasting that saved King Achab and the Ninivites from the divine vengeance. Hence if we wish to appease the anger of God and to shorten our purgatory, we should not neglect these most efficacious means of satisfaction.

III. Fasting raises our hearts to heavenly things. 1. Indulgence of the sensible appetite is quite incompatible with devotion and piety. Hence we notice that the saints led lives of austerity and mortification. Those to whom piety makes no appeal are, on the contrary, given over to pleasure seeking and sensible indulgence. 2. If we wish, therefore, to be able to pray more easily, to have a greater relish for spiritual things and the practice of virtue, we should not neglect this salutary means.

Conclusion. 1. That fasting may be pleasing to God and meritorious it should be accompanied, (a) by the state of grace; (b) by a spiritual intention. 2. Those who are not able to fast may obtain its advantages by using in its stead other means of mortification, such as, special practices of piety and religion, alms giving, charitableness, resignation to crosses, trials, etc., out of love for God.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

(See Fifth Sunday after Easter)

Sermon

Fasting and Abstinence

BY THE REV. H. G. HUGHES

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it; for he that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it.—St. Luke ix. 23–24.

Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.—St. Luke xiii. 3.

Bodily Mortification Taught by the Natural Law

Many centuries before the foundation of the Catholic Church, dear brethren in Jesus Christ, the benefit of fasting and abstinence, that is, of restriction in regard either to the quantity or quality of food, was recognized by mankind.

The most ancient peoples have instinctively practiced self-denial in this matter, not only because they considered it beneficial to health, but because they saw in it a means of subduing the animal part of human nature to that nobler spiritual element which they were conscious of possessing. Moreover, they made use of this practice with the full persuasion that by it they could make satisfaction for their sins, appease the wrath of the Deity, and obtain blessings from heaven.

Nor were they wrong. Overloaded as were their religious beliefs with the most monstrous error and superstition, they yet retained elements of truth—truth taught them by the voice of conscience, which is the voice of God Himself speaking to

us; or of truth that had come down to them from the far-off revelation made by the Almighty to primitive man—a survival, though distorted—of the religion of patriarchal times. This universal recognition, even by heathen nations, of the religious efficacy of fasting and abstinence, should be no slight argument in favor of the Catholic practice for those who so often denounce that practice as wrong. Could it be shown, indeed, that with the advent of our divine Lord Jesus and the Christian religion which He came to found, that the practice of fasting and abstinence was discountenanced under the new law of grace, there would be ground for its rejection as a ceremonial observance of the Mosaic law now no longer binding upon us, or as a mere heathen superstition that we are better without. But when we find, as we do find, that far from being abolished with the old law, it was adopted by our blessed Lord Himself, followed by the Apostles, in use amongst their immediate successors, and, finally, developed into a law and commandment by God's holy Church, we are bound to see in the custom of fasting amongst all peoples, not a result of superstition and error, but of the teachings of the law of God written in their hearts; and that in spite of the superstitious elements that undoubtedly have supervened in the case of heathen cults.

BODILY MORTIFICATION NEEDFUL

And, in truth, dear brethren, the ability, nay the necessity of bodily mortification, of which fasting and abstinence are seen to be in the nature of things a most efficacious form, arises from the sad fact of the fall of man.

Before the fall, human nature, in the persons of our first parents, was endowed with two kinds of gifts, above and beyond what was essential to the nature of man as such. Some of those gifts we term "supernatural," or lifting man to a higher plane; the others are called "preternatural." The latter, whilst conferring upon us some endowment beyond what belongs to our essential being as human, does not pertain to the higher, supernatural life. Thus, divine grace is a *supernatural* gift; immunity from bodily death is one instance of a *preternatural* gift. Amongst the preternatural gifts conferred upon

Adam and Eve, was one which in theological language is known as the gift of "integrity." By this gift the passions were entirely subjected to man's reason and will. There was then no danger of the bodily appetites rebelling against the spirit, clouding the reason, and carrying with them that noble faculty of will that ought to be moved only by what is reasonable and right. Since the fall our passions and bodily appetites both can and do rise in furious revolt, hiding from reason what is right, leading our wills astray after sensual pleasure in all its forms. Not one of us, however good, is wholly free from the sharp struggle that ensues from the disturbance of that harmony which reigned in our nature before sin came into the world. Does not St. Paul cry out, voicing the experience of all who strive to serve God, "When I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members" (Rom. vii. 21–24). And in another place the same holy Apostle tells us the remedy that he makes use of: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." And in the same place he compares the Christian to an athlete in training for a race: "So run that you may obtain; and everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they, indeed, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one" (1 Cor. ix. 24, 25, 27).

THE LAW OF THE CHURCH

In laying down, then, detailed laws for fasting and abstinence, the Church is simply exercising that prerogative which, amongst others, pertains to her as representative of God and interpreter of the law of Revelation; the prerogative and the duty, I mean, of determining for us the mode in which we are to fulfil those general obligations that in our frailty we should be apt to neglect were they left without such determination. Thus she determines for us the precise way in which we are to fulfil the general duties of setting apart some notable time for

God's worship; of making use of the means of grace; of self-denial and mortification. This she has done by laying down what we know as "the Commandments of the Church," of which the law of fasting and abstinence is one.

THE EXAMPLES FOLLOWED BY THE CHURCH

In regard to this law or commandment of the Church, she is following, as I have already intimated to you, the example of the Church of the Old Testament, of her divine Master Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Apostles.

"Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold," said the angel to Tobias and his son (Tobias xii. 8), and even to our non-Catholic friends who have rejected the Book of Tobias from their Bible we can bring this forward as a proof of Jewish practice. David fasted with prayer to obtain from God the life of his child. Queen Esther, when she "had recourse to the Lord" on behalf of her people, "laid away her royal apparel, put on garments suitable for weeping and mourning; instead of divers precious ointments she covered her head with ashes and she humbled her body with fasts" (Esth. xiv. 2). The people of Israel had their fastdays appointed by God; first the tenth day of the seventh month, and afterward, in the days of their captivity, the fasts of the fourth, fifth and tenth months (Zach. viii. 19). Our divine Lord, though all-sinless, fasted forty days and forty nights before entering upon His ministry; and He did it for an example to us, and as part of His meritorious work for our salvation. It is true that we do not read in the Gospels of His having personally imposed detailed laws concerning fasting or abstinence upon His disciples; but He plainly foretold that they would fast after He Himself had ceased to be visibly present among them. "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast." When and how His followers should fast, our blessed Lord left to the decision of His Church, who acts in His name and by His authority. We may well suppose that He abstained from commanding His followers to fast during His life on earth because of the abuses committed at that time by those of whom He

spoke when He said to His disciples, "When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face; that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who is in secret will repay thee" (St. Matt. vi. 16–18).

That the Apostles and first Christians fasted we know from two passages in the Acts of the Apostles. The first relates the sending forth of Saul and Barnabas on their missionary journey. We read that the Apostles and the "prophets" and "doctors" with them, were "ministering to the Lord and fasting" (Acts xiii. 2, 3). The other passage relates to the ordination of priests: "And when they had ordained to them priests in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed" (ib. xiv. 22).

From the early history of Christianity we learn that the example of our blessed Lord and the Apostles was followed; and that the practice of fasting, though it differed in details at various times and in various places, was recognized from Apostolic times as an important Christian duty. In course of time the duty was enforced by a law imposed by the divinely derived authority of the Holy Catholic Church.

Enough has already been said to show that fasting and abstinence are no empty superstitious observance, but a salutary religious practice, definitely approved by Almighty God, inculcated both by word and example by our Lord Jesus Christ, taught by the Apostles, and in use from the beginning of her long history by the Church Catholic.

THE BENEFITS OF FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

We will now more particularly enquire into the reasons for fasting and abstaining, and see wherein consists the benefit of them for our souls.

In the Lenten Preface of the Mass, Holy Church sums up the spiritual utility of fasting in these words, which apply, of course, to abstinence also: *"Deus, qui corporali, jejunio vita com-*

primis, mentem elevas, virtutem largiris et praemia."—"God, who through bodily fasting dost repress our vices, lift up our minds, and givest virtue and reward."'

"We fast," says St. Thomas Aquinas, (2. 2, 147, i), "chiefly for three reasons: First, in order to repress fleshly concupiscence; wherefore the Apostle says, 'In fastings: in chastity,' since chastity is preserved by fasting . . . Secondly, we fast in order that the mind may be the more easily lifted up to the thought of heavenly things . . . ; and thirdly, we fast in order to make satisfaction for our sins; whence it is written in the Prophet Joel: 'Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping, and in mourning'" (Joel ii. 12).

To sum up this testimony of holy Church and the great Doctor St. Thomas—by means of fasting, practiced with a good and religious motive, with due regard to the rules of prudence and discretion, and under the guidance of those whom the Church appoints as our directors in such matters, we repress the evil appetites of the body, and so destroy vice; we render easier, by repression of our animal nature, that approach of the soul to God, and that meditation on divine things which is so essential to sanctity, and in some degree, at least, even to salvation; finally we attain to virtue, satisfy for past sins, and merit a great reward which consists not only in the remission of temporal punishment, but also in a positive increase in that glory which we shall have in heaven.

Such are the exalted objects put before us by holy Church as a reason for the law of fasting and abstinence that she has imposed upon us. How unjust, how utterly unfounded is that accusation of her enemies which would make her guilty of recommending a superstitious and vain use of bodily mortification as being a good thing simply for its own sake; would make her guilty of the blasphemy, of regarding God our Father as a being who takes pleasure in the pain and suffering of His creatures—a Moloch who can be appeased only by voluntary self-destruction! Even in these days of so-called enlightenment this accusation is made, and made frequently; and the Catholic saint or devout religious man or woman who follows out the practices of our holy religion is compared to the igno-

rant heathen who mutilates his body for the pleasure of his false gods.

Dear brethren, it is not necessary for me to tell you how vast a difference there is between the practice of the Catholic Church in regard to bodily austerities, and those superstitious heathen usages on a level with which they are unfairly put by those who understand neither her spirit, nor her motives.

While we need not accuse every heathen cult even of entirely losing sight of that original reason for bodily mortification, the tradition of which, though obscured and distorted, is the only thing that can account for the recognition of the practice in almost every religion, yet that obscurity and that distortion have been generally so great that the primitive idea has been grossly corrupted. Hence, pain and suffering, self-inflicted, are looked upon by the votaries of heathen worship as ends in themselves; and their gods are represented as taking a cruel delight in those self-imposed punishments. Moreover, no bounds are set to the savage frenzy with which such self-torture is indulged in. It thus becomes not a reasonable, duly moderated religious act, but an irrational mania. In the Catholic Church, on the other hand, the motives of self-denial are good; the use is restricted and moderated by rules of prudence that are founded upon the experience of saints and spiritual men for centuries past. All is reasonable and moderate; and extreme austerity is not permitted but in those exceptional cases where an inspiration from on high clearly calls upon some servant of God to suffer more than others in a mysterious union with the all-atoning passion of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

SOME KIND OF PENANCE NECESSARY TO ALL

In these days, dear brethren, when life is lived in a hurry; when, for the majority, to gain a livelihood and to support a family means constant hard work and anxiety, the Church is very ready to release us from the obligation of fasting, and, in cases of ill-health, of abstinence also. But remember that the Church does not release us from the obligation of repressing our appetites whenever they interfere with the well-being of

our souls; she does not loose us from the obligation of lifting up our mind to the higher things, of cultivating virtue, of doing penance, of storing up merit against the day of the coming of the Lord. If, therefore, we are unable to fast or to abstain, we must assuredly do something else that will take the place of this particular form of self-denial. To *all,* whatever their circumstance, our divine Lord has said, "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself.*" To *all* who have sinned He says, "Unless you do penance, you shall . . . perish." Something, then, we must do; and I will suggest to you as fitting substitute for fasting, if you are unable to fast, some good and holy practices. I say, dear brethren, *if you are unable to fast;* because it would be very reprehensible to excuse ourselves too easily, and without real cause, from the commandment of the Church. Indeed, we should not excuse ourselves. We should put the circumstances of our case honestly and straightforwardly to the guide of our souls—our confessor, and follow his advice.

If it be that we are really unable to fulfil the precept of fasting or of abstinence without injury to health, we shall do well to fix upon something else in the way of self-denial that we will faithfully practice instead.

And first amongst these substitutes for fasting I would place restriction, or, if possible, total abstinence on fasting days from alcoholic drink. It is a thing that, unless in exceptional cases, can be abstained from not only without injury, but with positive benefit to health. Moreover, in our own days, with the ravages caused by over-indulgence in drink visible all around us, there are special reasons why a Catholic and a Christian should set a bright example of sobriety. Next I will place the Christian practice of almsgiving. Almsgiving, dear brethren, I mean, which we shall feel. It is not much to give to Almighty God from time to time a trifle of money, the loss of which we scarcely notice. Almsgiving which makes not the least difference to our expenditure on luxuries and pleasure is not worthy the name.

Again, if we cannot fast, we can pray. Some little addition to our devotional; a quarter of an hour spent in reading some pious book and lifting up our hearts to God in prayer as we

read, is surely not beyond the power and opportunity of many who, perhaps, never think of employing their leisure in any such way.

Dear brethren, I repeat it; if we do not fast, we must do something; something that will be real self-denial, real penance.

And let us not think that this will deject us, or make us unhappy. No, indeed. By fasting and abstinence, if they are possible to us; by some other act of mortification if they are not; we shall acquire a spiritual peace and joy that those only know who take up the Cross and follow Jesus Christ; who, having suffered and endured together with Him and in union with Him, shall together with Him also be glorified.

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QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

SUBJECT

THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY

TEXT

Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, . . . is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil . . . charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.—1 Cor. xiii. 4–8.

Analysis

Introduction. In the Church of Corinth and elsewhere in Apostolic times many of the faithful possessed certain extraordinary gifts, such as prophecy, the gift of healing, of speaking

strange languages, and the like; but St. Paul in the Epistle read to-day reminded them that there was another gift far more important than these miraculous powers, and that was charity, the queen of virtues.

I. The meaning of charity. 1. Charity is a supernatural and theological virtue infused into our soul by God which enables us to love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for God's sake. 2. Charity is called a *virtue*, because it is a habit which inclines us to exercise acts of love of God and of our neighbor. 3. It is called *supernatural*, because it is above our natural powers and is not acquired by our own acts or merits, but is infused as a pure gift of God in Baptism. Charity is lost only by mortal sin, but may be recovered in the Sacrament of Penance. 4. It is called a *theological* virtue, because, unlike the moral virtues which have the direction of our actions as their object, charity has God as its direct object. 5. The object of charity is twofold, God and our neighbor. We cannot love one as we should without loving the other.

II. The excellence of charity. 1. Charity is the greatest of the virtues, as St. Paul tells us in to-day's Epistle, "the greatest of these is charity." It is mentioned after faith and hope because these are a preparation for it. Rightly, then, is charity called the queen of virtues. 2. Charity is greater than the other virtues, because it unites us to God more closely than any other virtue, and because it is the goal toward which all the others tend. 3. Charity presupposes all the other virtues, but the others may be possessed without charity. When one has charity he is impelled to the practice of the other virtues, and to generosity in God's service. 4. Without charity the other virtues are dead and without merit for eternal life; hence the most sublime and heroic actions without charity profit us nothing, as St. Paul admonishes us. On the other hand, the slightest action, even a cup of cold water given out of charity, merits an eternal reward. 5. Charity is the only virtue which is able to justify the sinner, even before confession (John xiv. 21;

1 Peter iv. 8; Luke vii. 47), although it does not exempt from the duty of confession when this is possible. 6. Charity is the only one of the theological virtues that will remain with us in heaven, as St. Paul also reminds us.

Exhortation. 1. Catholics too often fail to see the duty of charity; they may go to Mass, to confession and Communion, say their prayers, and even practice austerities, but at the same time be given to ceaseless uncharitableness by quarrelling at home, talking about their relatives and neighbors, envying the success of others, harboring thoughts of revenge, etc. Such as these forget the words of St. Paul, that if one has faith sufficient to remove mountains, or would give his body to be burned, and has not charity, it profiteth him nothing. 2. Many of the philanthropists of our day also seriously misunderstand the Christian virtue of charity. Out of mere sentimentality or natural feelings of compassion they give vast sums to relieve the poor, the infirm, and the aged; they are ever on the alert to be of "service" to their fellow man in purely human ways, and all this they mistake for the virtue of charity as required by the Christian religion. In fact many of these persons and many organizations have come to think that the essence of Christianity consists in these natural virtues, all oblivious of St. Paul's admonition that if we should distribute all our goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profits us nothing. 3. Those who have the true virtue of charity should strive to increase it by acts of kindness, patience, humility, and the like.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Fifth Commandment

Mandatory part of this commandment, inculcates charity to all men

The mandatory part of this Commandment, as our Lord explains, requires that we have peace with all men. Interpreting the Commandment He says: "If therefore thou offer thy gift at

the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift," etc.[1]

In explaining this admonition, the pastor will show that it inculcates the duty of charity towards all without exception. In his instruction on the precept he should exhort the faithful to the practice of this virtue, since it is especially manifested in the observance of this precept. For since hatred is clearly forbidden by this Commandment, "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," [2] it follows as an evident consequence, that the Commandment also inculcates charity and love.

And since the Commandment inculcates charity and love, it must also enjoin all those duties and good offices which follow in their train. "Charity is patient," says St. Paul.[3] We are therefore commanded patience, in which, as the Redeemer teaches, "we shall possess our souls.[4] "Charity is kind"; [5] beneficence is, therefore, the friend and companion of charity. The virtue of beneficence and kindness has a great range. Its principal offices are to relieve the wants of the poor, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked; and in all these acts of beneficence we should proportion our liberality to the wants and necessities of those we help.

These works of beneficence and goodness, in themselves exalted, become still more illustrious when done towards an enemy; for our Lord says: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you," [6] which also the Apostle enjoins in these words: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he thirst, give him to drink. For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good." [7]

Finally, if we consider the law of charity, which is "kind," we shall be convinced that to practice the good offices of mildness, clemency, and other kindred virtues, is a duty prescribed by that law.

[1] Matt. v. 23, 24. [2] 1 John iii. 15. [3] 1 Cor. xiii. 4.
[4] Luke xxi. 19. [5] 1 Cor. xiii. 4. [6] Matt. v. 44.
[7] Rom. xii. 20.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRES FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES

But the most important duty of all and that which is the fullest expression of charity, and to the practice of which we should most habituate ourselves, is to pardon and forgive from the heart the injuries which we may have received from others. The Sacred Scriptures, as we have already observed, frequently admonish and exhort us to a full and faithful compliance with this duty. Not only do they pronounce "blessed" those who do this, but they also declare that God grants pardon to those who fulfill this duty, while He refuses pardon to those who neglect it.[8]

MOTIVES FOR FORGIVENESS

But, as the desire of revenge is almost natural to man, it becomes necessary for the pastor to exert his utmost diligence not only to instruct, but also earnestly to persuade the faithful, that a Christian should forgive and forget injuries; and as this is a duty frequently inculcated by sacred writers, he will consult them on the subject, in order to be able to subdue the pertinacity of those whose minds are obstinately bent on revenge, and he should have ready the forcible and appropriate arguments which those Fathers piously employed.[9]

I. ALL WE HAVE TO ENDURE COMES FROM GOD

The three following considerations, however, demand particular attention and exposition. First, to use every effort to persuade him, who thinks himself injured, that the man on whom he desires to be revenged, was not the principal cause of the loss sustained or of the injury inflicted. This is exemplified in the conduct of that admirable man, Job. When violently injured by the Sabeans, the Chaldeans, and by Satan, he took no account of these, but as a righteous and holy man he exclaimed with no less truth than piety: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away." [10]

[8] Deut. xxxii. 35; 1 Kings xxv. 32, 33; xxvi. 6, 7, 8, 9; 2 Kings xix. 19, 20; Ps. vii. 5; Eccl. xxviii.; Isa. lviii. 6; Matt. vi. 14, and elsewhere; Tertul., in Apol. cc. 31, 37; Aug., in Joan. tract. 81; lib. 50. Hom. 6; ser. 61, 168. de temp.

[9] See citations under preceding paragraph.

[10] Job i. 21.

The words and the example of that man of patience should, therefore, convince Christians, and the conviction is most just, that whatever chastisements we endure in this life come from the hand of God, the Father and Author of all justice and mercy. He chastises us not as enemies, but, in His infinite goodness, corrects us as children. To view the matter in its true light, men, in these cases, are nothing more than the ministers and agents of God. One man, it is true, may cherish the worst feelings towards another, he may harbor the most malignant hatred against him; but, without the permission of God, he can do him no injury. This is why Joseph was able patiently to endure the wicked counsels of his brethren,[11] and David the injuries inflicted on him by Semei.[12]

Here also applies an argument which St. Chrysostom has ably and learnedly handled. It is that no man is injured but by himself.[13] Let the man, who considers himself injured by another, consider the matter in the right way and he will certainly find that he has received no injury or loss from others. For although he may have experienced injury from external causes he is himself his greatest enemy, by wickedly staining his soul with hatred, malevolence, and envy.

2. ADVANTAGES OF FORGIVENESS

The second consideration is that there are two advantages, which are the special rewards of those, who, influenced by a holy desire to please God, freely forgive injuries. In the first place, God has promised that he who forgives, shall himself obtain forgiveness,[14] a promise which clearly shows how acceptable to God is this duty of piety. In the next place, the forgiveness of injuries ennobles and perfects our nature; for by it man is in some degree made like to God, "Who maketh his sun to shine on the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." [15]

[11] Gen. xlv. 5. [12] 2 Kings xvi. 10.
[13] Vol. 3. in hom. "quod nemo læditur nisi a seipso."
[14] Matt. xviii. 33. [15] Matt. v. 48.

3. DISADVANTAGES OF REVENGE

Finally, the disadvantages which arise from the refusal to pardon others are to be explained. The pastor, therefore, will place before the eyes of the unforgiving man that hatred is not only a grievous sin, but also that the longer it is indulged the more deeply rooted it becomes. The man, of whose heart this passion has once taken possession, thirsts for the blood of his enemy. Filled with the hope of revenge, he will spend his days and nights brooding over some evil design, so that his mind seems never to rest from malignant projects, or even from thoughts of blood. Thus it follows that never, or at least not without extreme difficulty, can he be induced generously to pardon an offense, or even to mitigate his hostility. Justly, therefore, is hatred compared to a wound from which the weapon has never been extracted.

Moreover, there are many evil consequences and sins which are linked together with this one sin of hatred. Hence these words of St. John: "He that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." [16] He must therefore frequently fall; for how can any one view in a favorable light the words or actions of him whom he hates? Hence arise rash and unjust judgments, anger, envy, detractions and other evils of the same sort, in which are often involved those who are connected by ties of friendship or blood; and thus does it frequently happen that this one sin is the prolific source of many.

Not without good reason is hatred called "the sin of the devil." The devil was a murderer from the beginning; and hence our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when the Pharisees sought His life, said that "they were begotten of their father the devil." [17]

REMEDIES AGAINST HATRED

But besides the reasons already adduced, which afford good grounds for detesting this sin, other and more efficacious remedies are prescribed in the pages of Holy Writ. Of these remedies

[16] 1 John. ii. 11. [17] John viii. 44.

the first and greatest is the example of the Redeemer, which we should set before our eyes as a model for imitation. For He, in whom even suspicion of fault could not be found, when scourged with rods, crowned with thorns, and finally nailed to a cross, uttered that most charitable prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[18] And as the Apostle testifies: "The sprinkling of His blood speaketh better than Abel.[19]

Another remedy, prescribed by Ecclesiasticus, is to call to mind death and judgment: "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."[20] As if he had said: Reflect frequently and again and again that since you must soon die, and since at death there will be nothing you desire or need more than God's mercy, that now you should keep that mercy always before your mind. Thus the desire for revenge will be extinguished; for you can discover no means better adapted, none more efficacious to obtain the mercy of God than the forgiveness of injuries and love towards those who in word or deed may have injured you or yours.

Sermon

Worldly Philanthropy and Christian Charity

BY THE REV. STEPHEN J. BROWN, S.J.

But above all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves, for charity covereth a multitude of sins.—1 Peter iv. 8.

FALSE NOTION OF CHARITY GENERALLY PREVALENT

Charity, my dear brethren, is to-day a much used word, I might almost say a much misused word. It is a word that is to be seen on every side. Everywhere there are institutes and organizations of charity, charity schools, charitable associations, charity bazaars, charity concerts. The newspapers are full of appeals in behalf of the various charities. All that is excellent and something for which to thank God. But there is a possibility that the current use of the *word* may obscure in our minds the true meaning of the *thing*. That it has done so in the case of many of our fellow Christians outside of the Church is abundantly

[18] Heb. xii. 24. [19] Luke xxiii. 34. [20] Eccl. vii. 40.

evident. It is evident from the growing tendency in these days of ours to think of religion as being summed up in charity, and of charity as being summed up in almsgiving and what we Catholics call the corporal works of mercy. Many men have come to think that, if they give fairly regularly to the various deserving charities, the rest of their lives will pass muster and that it matters little enough to what religious persuasion they belong. They may be somewhat sharp, let us say, in business matters, they may be not over-scrupulous, as they would put it, as to how they take their pleasures. But after all they are charitable, and are we not told that charity covers a multitude of sins?

Now I know, my dear brethren, that well-instructed Catholics such as you are would not argue with themselves in such a fashion. But even the healthy sometimes catch an epidemic. And, when an idea prevails very generally in the surroundings in which we live, it is almost inevitable that some Catholics should come to think and talk as those around them think and talk. And there are Catholics to be found who have come to think and talk of charity almost as though it consisted solely in raising money for some laudable object. And since the object is certainly laudable, the means do not seem to matter much. Concerts, dances, plays, bazaars, bridge-drives and I know not what besides, are organized in the name of charity. And charity has certainly good reason to bless the names of those who give their time and trouble and money to the good cause. But are there not multitudes of Catholics whose only contribution to charity is to dance and buy and play and look on, in short to enjoy themselves thoroughly in the cause of charity? Are they doing wrong? No. Their mistake begins only when they act or speak as if charity were summed up in that, or when they go further—and I do not think that this is quite unknown—and excuse the faults and even sins committed in the midst of these rounds of pleasure, on the plea that, after all, it was for charity. It is as if they called in Scripture to their aid, saying that charity covers a multitude of sins—perhaps, even, it might cover a tango-tea!

CHARITY FUNDAMENTAL

Now in the minds of people who think like this there is a false notion as to the real nature of charity, and this false notion is all the more lamentable because charity in the true sense lies at the very root of our Christianity. The thought was ever in the heart of Christ, for the word is ever on His lips. He told His disciples at the most solemn moment of His life, the night before He suffered, that to love one another was His special commandment, and He repeated it again and again (John xiii. 34; xv. 17). We are to love our fellow men as ourselves (Matt. xxii. 39), nay, we are to love them as Christ loved us (John xiii. 34), and what greater love than that can we conceive? And all through His life He had spoken of charity as the foundation and distinguishing characteristic of the religion He had come to found (John xii. 35). And as with the Master so with the disciples. Take them one after another. "All the law," says St. Paul, "is fulfilled in one sentence: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Gal. v. 13). And again and again in his epistles he comes back to this thought (Rom. xiii. 8-10; Gal. vi. 2; Col. iii. 14, etc.). We are not surprised to find that in the writings of St. John, the Apostle of love, charity is the constant burden of his teaching. He never tires of repeating that his Master's great commandment is: Love one another (1 John iii. 18; iv. 20, etc.). Then the Apostle St. James tells us in his epistle that we must "fulfil the royal law: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (James ii. 8), and exhorts us to love and help the poor and the orphan and the outcast. Finally there is St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, from whose epistle I have taken my text. Therefore, my dear brethren, I say, that if the religion of Christ is to have its true meaning for us, above all if we wish to be able to give testimony of the faith that is in us, we must fully realize what Christ and His Apostles meant by charity.

CHARITY DIVINE AND FRATERNAL

Now it is clear at once that charity, or love—for charity is nothing else but Christian love—has three possible objects: God,

self, our fellow men. But does that make three separate and distinct charities? No, my brethren, and that is the first thing we must bring home to ourselves if we would understand the true nature of Christian charity. Leaving out of count for the present that sane and ordered love of ourselves which is the will of God as well as a dictate of nature, the love of God and the love of our fellow men are, in the thought of Christ, inseparable. He was asked one day what was the great commandment of the Law. He answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this"—mark the word, like to this—"thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 37). And now listen to St. John who knew, as none other, the Master's heart. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God: That he who loveth God should love also his brother" (1 John iv. 20). Therefore, no man who has not charity towards his fellow man can pretend that he has love for God. And on the other hand, no man who does not love God need pretend that he has that love for his fellow men of which the Gospel speaks, that love for his fellow men upon which Christ and His Apostles founded the practice of Christianity. Now I ask you, what does the love of God mean for us in practice? I will let the words of Christ our Lord answer the question: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John xiv. 15). "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John xiv. 21). And again let us hear St. John echoing the words of the Master: "This is the charity of God that we keep His commandments" (1 John v. 3). "This is charity that we walk according to His commandments" (II John v. 6). You see it then, loving his fellow men in the true Christian sense means loving God, and loving God means, as far as our frailty allows, living according to all the laws of God and of those to whom He has given authority to speak in His name.

CHARITY AND SIN

How far are we already from that vague philanthropy which to-day, with so many men, takes the place of Christianity? And, first, have we not disposed of the plea that, for such minds, lurks behind the Scripture text, "charity covereth a multitude of sins." Let me now explain to you the true meaning of that text. It occurs, we have seen, in a letter of the Apostle St. Peter, but it is an echo from a book of the Old Testament, the Book of Proverbs. In the tenth chapter of that book we read: "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but charity covereth all sins" (Prov. x. 12), that is, according to the literal meaning, a charitable person draws a veil over his neighbor's faults and shortcomings and so avoids the stirring up of strifes. The commentators tell us that St. Peter may very well have used these words with the same meaning that they have in the book of Proverbs. He may also have applied them, as of course it was perfectly lawful to do, to the effects of charity upon our own souls. If we have, he would say, in our hearts the true love of God and man, God will look with pity and compassion on our frailties. Our charity will be a title to His mercy and forgiveness. For, my dear brethren, here as everywhere else in Scripture we must interpret its words in the light of its general teaching and in accordance with the teaching which the Church hands to us as received from her Divine Founder. Now we know there are few teachings of Scripture, few doctrines of the Church clearer or more certain than this: Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins. Whether that repentance take the form of an act of perfect contrition or, what is equivalent, an act of perfect charity, or whether it take the form of contrition and confession, repentance there must be. "Unless you repent you shall all perish" (Luke xiii. 3-5; *cf.* Luke v. 32; Mark iv. 17). These are Christ's words, and St. Peter, preaching to the Jews, said to them: "Be repentant, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts iii. 19; *cf.* viii. 22). If we wish to find forgiveness we must turn away from the outrage and insult we have committed against the all-good and all-holy God. We must turn back to Him trusting that He will

not reject the humbled and contrite heart. Without that humble contrition no philanthropy will blot out our sins.

IS ALMSGIVING THE WHOLE OF CHARITY?

But you will say to me: Has not God promised magnificent rewards, nay, heaven itself, to those who are charitable to the poor? Has not our Divine Lord told us, in His description of the Last Judgment (Matt. xxv), that He will say to the charitable: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, and possess the kingdom prepared for you. . . . For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat," and so on, mentioning only the corporal works of mercy. And the motive of this judgment, our Lord Himself tells us, is that as long as this was done to one of His least brethren He took it as done to Him. Yes, my brethren, it is most true that these are the words of Christ. They tell us that He is ready to make the practice of charity a matter of life and death when we stand before His judgment seat. They tell us, and that is the thought which our Lord wished above all to impress upon those to whom He spoke, that He will regard as done to Him what is done to our neighbor, that He identifies Himself, so to speak, with our fellow men. But He does not contradict what He tells us so often elsewhere in the Gospel that to be saved we must follow Him, believe in Him, accept His religion, that, if we have the misfortune to fall into sin, we must repent. If a man will not repent, even the most abundant works of mercy will not save him.

But not only is it possible for a man to give abundant alms and yet not to secure his salvation: it is even possible for him to give abundant alms and yet not have Christian charity. Listen to St. Paul: "If I should speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 1). And indeed, to take an extreme case, what would our Christian sense tell us as to the chances of salvation of a man who, having spent the best part of his life in "grinding the faces of the poor," spends his old age in signing checks for philanthropic institutions. God would surely expect something more from such a man.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

But that you may fully understand the real nature of Christian charity, let me set before you some of the characters and marks of it, as it is described by Christ and His Apostles.

(a) *Unselfish.* In the first place, then, it is hardly necessary for me to say that true Christian charity is in the main disinterested and unselfish. We are, says Christ, to love one another as He has loved us (John xiii. 34). That is the true model of our love for our fellow men, and was ever love so utterly unselfish as that of our Divine Saviour? Oh, I know too well that such perfection of love is far above our misery, yet that is what we must aim at if our charity is to be worthy of the name. And has it not been so in all the ages of the Church? Do we not find this selfless charity in the lives of God's saints, in the lives of the Church's missionaries, leaving home and country and all they loved to spend years of hardship and toil in far-off lands for the sake of their fellow men who know not Christ? Do we not see it in the Sister of Charity, the Sister of Mercy, the Little Sister of the Poor, and so many others, self-devoted to the poor for life? Do we not see it in many a humble Catholic who has spent time and money and labor and love on others without hope of any reward on this side of the grave? [Illustrations according to locality.] All deep true human love—true mother's love, for example—is unselfish. It does not do good to others with a view to what can be got for self out of the good action or with hope of return from the person benefited. It works not for popularity nor even for gratitude. Can so much always be said of the philanthropy that is practiced to-day? Let us pass no harsh judgment; but, alas, of the donations that figure on the subscription lists of charities how many are on it because the donor hopes a substantial return in the shape of advertisement for his business, or because he must be as good as his neighbor if he would maintain his social position? All such self-seeking St. Paul excludes from true Christian charity in the words: "Charity is not ambitious, seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. xiii).

(b) *Universal.* Then again true Christian charity is not exclusive, it does not pick and choose its objects, it extends to all. Philanthropy, when it loves at all, loves its friends and feels

benignant towards such objects of its bounty as show a proper recognition of and return for the giver's liberality. That is surely good so far as it goes, but is that the whole of Christian charity? Surely not, my brethren. Listen to Christ's own words: "If you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? for sinners also love those that love them. And if you do good to them who do good to you, what thanks are to you? For sinners also do this. And if you lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what thanks are to you? For sinners also lend to sinners in order to receive as much. But love your enemies: do good and lend, hoping for nothing thereby: and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the sons of the most High; for He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke vi. 32 *sq.*). You see, my brethren, not even your enemies may be excluded from your charity. Christ, it is true, does not ask us to give them what we call *affection*. But at least we must not exclude them from our good will and from our good works. And, if your enemies must not be excluded, still less must any of your fellow men who are not your enemies. [Illustrations according to locality—beggars, colored folk, non-Catholics, political opponents, etc.] "There is neither Jew nor Greek," says St. Paul, "there is neither bond nor free . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28).

(c) *Supernatural.* These words of St. Paul bring us to that which is at the root of all the difference between merely human, merely worldly philanthropy and Christian charity. The difference is Christ. You know what is at the back of this philanthropy, this vague benevolence towards one's fellow men which with so many has taken the place of religion. It is on the one hand the idea that the betterment of the race for its own sake, the progress of human society, is the highest aim of man's endeavor. On the other there is the impulse to satisfy certain humane instincts which are pained at the sight of the poverty and misery with which the world is filled. Is that an evil thing, my brethren, and do Christians condemn it? Far be it from us. We condemn only its excesses which lead so many well-meaning people to be more concerned about the physical sufferings of dogs and cats and horses than about the sin which is destroying the souls of men.

But whatever good there be in it, it is something wholly different from that charity of which we are speaking now. Christian charity springs out of the faith, revealed from God, that every soul of man is an immortal image of Him who is its maker and ours—nay, not an image only, but a most dear child (Eph. v. 1; *cf.* Rom. viii. 14-16; Gal. iii. 26). It springs out of the faith that every soul of man is the brother of Christ, bought at the price of His blood and death. Lastly it springs out of the memory of the example of a love that has loved us all more than life and that will love us to the end, and out of obedience to His command that we are to love one another even as He loved us. Such is Christian charity.

Here and now, my brethren and fellow servants of Christ, I appeal to your Christlike charity, I plead the cause of a Christian charity that knows no bounds. If Christ died for you and me, He died no less for the ragged and perhaps degraded beggar and the crime-stained jail-bird and the abandoned outcast. The heart of the true Christian yearns even towards such as these. True Christian charity sees Christ in them all—in the disfigured leper of Molokai, in the lowest denizens of a city slum, in the inmate of penitentiary and jail. And why? Because Christ has identified Himself with these, because He has bidden His followers to give to these the love they would give to Him. And, when we all shall stand before Him at the last, "Whatsoever," He will say to us, "whatsoever you did to these my least brethren, ye did it unto me" (Matt. xxv).

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FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

SUBJECT

THE LAW OF FASTING AND ABSTINENCE

TEXT

When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.—Matt. iv. 2.

Analysis

Introduction. Immediately after our Lord was baptized in the Jordan, before entering upon His public ministry, He retired to a desert and rocky region along the western coast of the Dead Sea, and there fasted for forty days and forty nights. It is in commemoration of this event in the life of our Saviour that the Church has set aside the season of Lent.

I. The meaning of the law of fasting and abstinence. 1. The law of fasting requires that only one full meal be taken a day; but it does not forbid that, in addition to this, some food be taken in the morning and in the evening in accordance with the approved custom of one's locality. This law does not forbid the eating of fish and flesh at the same meal, and it permits one to take his full meal either at noon or in the evening, as he may wish. 2. The law of abstinence requires that one abstain from meat, as well as soup or broth made from meat; it does not forbid the use of eggs, butter, milk, cheese, etc. 3. The days of abstinence are all the Fridays of the year; this is in memory of our Lord's death on Good Friday. But when Friday falls on a Holyday, *e.g.*, Christmas, meat may be eaten. 4. The times of fasting are: (a) the Ember Days, *i.e.*, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday in a week of each of the four seasons of the year. The purpose of these fasts is to consecrate each season of the year by some days of mortification, to thank God for His graces, ask His blessing upon the harvest, and to pray for those whom it is customary to ordain to the priest-

hood at those times. (b) The vigils of Pentecost, Assumption, All Saints, and Christmas. These days are called vigils because in ancient times the faithful used to spend the night before them in watching, prayer and fasting. (c) The longest, strictest and most venerable fast of the year is that of Lent, which goes back to the times of the Apostles. It commemorates our Lord's forty days' fast in the desert, associates us with His suffering by the practice of penance, and prepares us for the great feast of Easter. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and terminates at noon on Easter Saturday. 5. The days of both fasting and abstinence are: (a) Ember Days; (b) the vigils mentioned above: (c) Ash Wednesday and the Fridays and Saturdays in Lent.

II. The obligation of the law of fasting and abstinence. 1. Fasting in general is of the natural law, because nature and common sense teach us that it is necessary for subduing the passions, elevating the mind to spiritual things and making satisfaction for sin. Hence it has been practiced at all times, as we learn from the Old Testament (Exod. xxiv. 18; Jonas iii. 10; Dan. i. 15; 1 Esdras. viii. 23, etc.). Moreover, fasting has its basis in the law of mortification laid down by our Lord (Luke xiii. 5). But as neither the natural, nor the divine law has fixed the time and circumstances for observing fast and abstinence, the Church, in virtue of her divinely given authority of making laws that are for the advantage of the faithful, has determined the days, the times, and the manner of fasting and abstaining. 2. The law of abstinence binds all those who have completed their seventh year. The law of fasting obliges all who have completed their twenty-first year, and who have not yet entered upon their sixtieth year. 3. Reasons which excuse from the law of fasting and abstinence are: (a) infirm health, which would be made worse by fasting; (b) necessary work that is incompatible with fasting; (c) works of charity or piety for which there is some necessity, or which are more valuable than fasting, *e.g.*, waiting on the sick, making a pilgrim-

age. 4. Those who are in doubt as to whether they are excused from fasting or abstinence should consult their confessor. Dispensations may be granted by parish priests (See Code, cc. 1243 ff.).

Exhortation. 1. Those who are able to fast should do so gladly and cheerfully in memory of the great event which Lent commemorates, and for the sake of the great blessings it brings with it. 2. Those who are excused from fasting and abstinence should remember that they are not exempt from the law of mortification and self-denial which they can fulfill by saying extra prayers, hearing Mass when possible on week days, giving alms to the poor or for holy purposes, refraining from unnecessary amusements, delicacies, etc.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

(See Fifth Sunday after Easter)

Sermon

The Season of Lent, Its History, Meaning, and Object

BY DOM BERNARD HAYES, O.S.B.

INTRODUCTION

In the Mass of Ash Wednesday, my dear brethren, the following words of the prophet Joel are read: "Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, in weeping, and in mourning. . . . Blow the trumpet in Sion, sanctify a fast, gather together the people, sanctify the Church" (Joel ii.).

The great fast of Lent has been proclaimed, and the trumpet sounds throughout the Church of God, calling the people to forsake the false joys of earth and to be converted to their God with all their heart. The voice of the trumpet proclaims: "Let fasting take the place of feasting, weeping of mirth, and mourning of joy." What, my brethren, is the object of this season which comes so harshly into the ordinary course of our lives? Whence did it come? Is it necessary for us now, or is

it cherished merely as an interesting historical survival? We have a right, my brethren, to be satisfied on these points, for Lent makes large demands upon your generosity; and when we must put ourselves to grave inconvenience, we all like to know that it is for good reasons.

I propose, therefore, my brethren, to explain this season of Lent, to show its object, and to prove its necessity.

We get the word "Lent" from the old Anglo-Saxon language; Lenten-tide meant Spring-time, and "Lent" the Spring fast. In Latin this season is called "Quadragesima," which means "fortieth," and expresses the number of the days of the fast. This number recalls to our minds that Jesus Christ was led by the spirit into the desert and fasted forty days and forty nights (Matt. iv.).

NECESSITY OF PENANCE

The Church wishes each of her children, in imitation of Christ, to spend a like period each year in penance and recollection. Her discipline of penance is mainly under the form of fasting. Fasting has been defined as an "abstinence, which man voluntarily imposes upon himself, as an expiation for sin, and which, during Lent, is practiced in obedience to the general law of the Church." She insists upon penance, because it is clear from the Scriptures that God demands it, and in choosing this form of it, the Church was not guided merely by natural wisdom, but by the evidence in the Old and New Testaments that this was acceptable to God.

Let us take some examples. In the prophecy of Jonas we read that "the word of the Lord came to Jonas, saying: 'Arise and go to Ninive, the great city, and preach in it the preaching that I bid thee.'" And Jonas arose and, entering into the city, cried: "Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed." And the men of Ninive believed in God: and they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least. . . . And God saw their works that they were turned from their evil way: and God had mercy with regard to the evil which He had said He would do to them, and He did it not" (Jonas iii.). In the Book of Deuteronomy we have another striking example

of God's wrath being turned aside by penance and prayer. Moses recalls to the memory of the people how, in Horeb, they had provoked God to wrath and would have been destroyed for their idolatry. After having received the commandments upon tables of stone, he came down the mountain and found the people adoring the golden calf. "And I fell down," he says, "before the Lord, forty days and nights, neither eating bread nor drinking water, for all your sins which you had committed against the Lord, and had provoked Him to wrath. . . . And I lay prostrate before the Lord forty days and nights, in which I humbly besought Him that He would not destroy you as He had threatened" (Deut. ix.).

Thus throughout the Old Testament we find that when men had sinned they strove to appease the wrath of God by bodily penance and by humble prayer. The same gospel of penance is preached by the second Elias, St. John the Baptist, who preceded the first coming of the Son of God upon earth, as Elias himself is to come "to restore all things" before Jesus Christ comes to judge the world. We read in St. Mark's gospel that: "John was in the desert, baptising and preaching the baptism of penance unto remission of sins" (Mark i. 4). He spoke to the multitudes in strong words; he did not suit his words to the degenerate views of his day. "Ye offspring of vipers," he cried, "who hath showed you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits worthy of penance" (Luke iii).

Is it surprising then, my brethren, that the first public lesson given to men by our Saviour Himself is the lesson of penance? Nay, should not we be surprised if He, who had sent as His herald one "clothed with a garment of camel's hair, and whose food was locusts and wild honey," had lived a life in which penance found no place? Therefore, after His baptism by St. John in the Jordan, He withdrew into the desert wastes and for "forty days and forty nights" He tasted neither food nor drink. The years of His public life also were filled with penitential labors. All the day He worked for His people and the nights He spent in prayer. His lot in life could have been so different; but He *chose* suffering as his portion, as St. Paul testifies: "Having joy set before him, He endured the cross, despising

the shame" (Heb. xii. 2). His test of a true follower is: "Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink?" (Matt. xx. 22).

Once when our Lord had foretold His approaching passion, St. Peter said: "Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee." Who, turning to Peter, said: "Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me: because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." Then Jesus said to His disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. xvi. 22). On another occasion Christ said: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 3). Not only did our divine Lord insist upon penance in general, but He wished that particular form of penance, known as "fasting," to be practiced under the New Law: "The days will come," He said, "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall fast" (Matt. ix. 14). Such was the teaching and example of Christ. What, my dear brethren, was the result? When the Apostles went forth to win the pagan world, to convert it to Christ, they preached salvation through penance. St. Paul told the Corinthians that the message he brought from God to men was an unpopular one: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 23). St. Peter, in his first epistle, wrote: "Christ, having suffered in the flesh, be ye armed with the same thought: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sins" (1 Pet. iv. 1).

INSTITUTION OF LENT

Many of the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church say that the Apostles decreed that the great solemnity of Easter should be preceded by a universal fast; and that, in remembrance of Christ's forty-days' fast in the desert, they instituted Lent. To begin with, there was no uniform way of observing it. But the faithful for forty days gave themselves to fasting and prayer in imitation of their Master. In the beginning, the Christians adopted the same customs of fasting as were prescribed in the Old Law, by which one meal only was allowed

on fasting days, and that after sunset. This rule seems to have been strictly observed, and for the first eight centuries the one meal allowed was taken after Vespers. Moreover, abstinence from flesh meat was everywhere looked on as essential to fasting, and for many centuries even eggs and milk-meats were not allowed. In the ninth century we notice relaxations appearing in the ancient discipline. The one meal began to be taken at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour of None, instead of after Vespers. In the tenth century this has become universal and has been allowed, but the hour of vespers is now also earlier and is still before the meal. At the close of the thirteenth century vespers and the fasting meal were at midday. When the repast was taken so early, it is not surprising to find that a "collation" was found necessary in the evening. The use of this word comes from the Rule of St. Benedict. There we find a distinction made between the fasts of the Church and the fasts of the Rule: On days of monastic fast the dinner was at three o'clock, the hour of None, instead of after Vespers. In the summer and autumn months, when the work in the fields was heavy and the heat fatiguing, the abbot was allowed to give to the monks a small measure of wine before Compline, during the reading of the "Conferences of Cassian." Now the Latin word for "Conference" is "Collatio"; and from this name the evening refreshment on fasting days came to be called "Collation." After the ninth century the use of meat during Lent began; at first only milk-meats, in the northern countries. Councils and Popes ever strove to keep the old austerity, but dispensations became necessary; dispensations became general customs, and customs were tacitly sanctioned, until in the seventeenth century the use of these meats seems to have become universal. Since the so-called Reformation, the history of the Church has been one long fight against laxity and self-indulgence. Even amongst those of the household of the faith, how little reverence remains for this holy season, and how little of the spirit of penance! We Catholics, my brethren, must not be influenced by the spirit of the world; it is our high vocation to be as a leaven of righteousness amongst men. We must set the example to a self-indulgent world of that peni-

tential spirit which is the mark of the followers of Christ. Although the history of Lent seems to be one of gradual relaxation, yet we must never forget that there is an unwritten history of strict observance and of generous self-denial. The relaxations were no revolt against the Cross, as was the case with Luther and his agents, who rejected all ancient discipline and gave men freedom for their inclinations. But as the rising tide, inch by inch, possesses itself of the whole beach, so the waves of luxury have ever risen higher and ever extended their conquests, till it seems as if they will engulf what little remains of the spirit of Christian self-denial. Can we then, my brethren, do without the barriers which the Church opposes to the advancing tide? No, my brethren, we cannot! If we wish to keep alive in this corrupt world the true spirit of Jesus Christ, we must return to the simplicity and strictness of earlier days. The example of our forefathers, whose noble inheritance we now possess, must make us loyal to the Church's laws of penance.

True penance, my brethren, does not consist merely in mortification of the body, but in that of the soul also. Sin is committed by the will, and therefore it is just that the will as well as the body should make atonement. Before bodily penance can be of any avail for sanctification, it must be accepted by the will. The effects of the lash upon a criminal is very different from those of a saint's discipline. The former subdues the body, but makes the will rise in revolt, whilst the latter brings both body and soul to the feet of God. The Church, therefore, aims not only at subduing men's bodies by her penitential laws, but she strives to fill their souls with the spirit of penance. This she does by means of her liturgy. She opens this holy season by sprinkling ashes upon the heads of the faithful. As Job sprinkled his flesh with ashes, and as King David, after sinning grievously, mingled ashes with his bread in order to appease God's anger and indignation, so the Christian recalls his sins and humbles himself before God; he recalls that even though God has forgiven the sin, yet the punishment of sin, death, has yet to be endured. So he bows his head that the ashes may be put upon it, and with humble heart he hears

the sentence of death pronounced upon him: "Remember, O man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return!" Formerly it was the custom to approach barefooted to receive the ashes, and we read of a Pope of the twelfth century, surrounded by his cardinals, walking barefooted from the church of St. Anastasia to that of St. Sabina, where the Ash Wednesday ceremony was to be performed. The prayers which are used at the blessing of the ashes and during the Mass of the day, if said with fervor, will fill us with consciousness of sin, with the sense of our weakness and need of God's help, with feelings of humility and with a vivid realization of the imminence of death. Everyone, my dear brethren, should have a Missal and carefully follow the beautiful words of the liturgy in order to acquire the sentiments of heart suited to this season.

In order that she may still more impress us, the Church banishes from her services all the pomp by which she loves to honor God, and all signs of joy. The eye sees on every side signs of penance; the ministers in the sanctuary are clad in somber purple; there are no flowers upon the altar. The ear hears no longer the joyous *Alleluia,* or the hymn of the Angels' choir, the *Gloria in excelsis,* or the glad tones of the organ. At the conclusion of the great liturgy of the Mass, the deacon no longer dismisses the people with the words *"Ite, Missa est,"* but he says, *"Benedicamus Domino," "Let us bless the Lord,"* as if to encourage the people to persevere in prayer even when not present at the sacred mysteries.

On the fourth Sunday of Lent, the Church allows a ray of joy to pierce the gloom, in order to encourage her children to persevere. This is called *"Laetare"* Sunday, from the first word of the Introit of the Mass. Flowers appear upon the altar, the organ is once more heard, and rose-colored vestments may be used. The note of joy and hope sounds through all the words of this day's liturgy. The Sunday ends, and the clouds close over once more, and we are again sitting clothed with sackcloth and ashes, bemoaning our sins and appeasing the anger of our injured God.

THE PASSION

Up to this point, my brethren, in order to rouse in us sentiments of contrition and humility, the Church has turned our eyes upon our own sinfulness, and upon death the punishment for sin. She has tried to wring from our stony hearts tears of compunction and humiliation by the contemplation of our own misery. She now turns our eyes upon Jesus Christ, the Victim of Sin; she recalls to us in all their details the sufferings He underwent to atone for our sins. During the closing two weeks of Lent, which are known as Passion-tide, the great drama of redemption is set before us as if it were actually happening. By this annual commemoration of the Sacred Passion, she gives to us a higher and purer motive for doing penance for our sins. She would have us "think diligently upon Him who endureth such opposition from sinners against Himself, that we be not wearied, fainting in our minds. For we have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 2–4). What could make us more ready to run to the fight proposed to us than the example of that Innocent Victim, who came "to reconcile all things unto God, making peace through the blood of the Cross?" (Col. i. 20). By the liturgy of Passion-tide the Church tries to create in us the "same mind as was in the Lord Jesus," so that, as He willed to suffer and die to save us, we on our part may generously undergo that penitential crucifixion of our lower natures which God demands of us before He will receive us. There could be no more vivid meditation on the Sacred Passion than the liturgy of Holy Week. The original tragedy is re-enacted for us, and to those who devoutly follow the steps of our suffering Lord the week is one continuous soul-moving contemplation.

On Palm Sunday we accompany Jesus from Bethania to Jerusalem. We join the shouting throngs which greet Him as the Messias. "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. O, King of Israel! Hosanna in the highest." We take palms in our hands, and with psalm and antiphon accompany Jesus in His triumph and hail Him as the "King of Israel."

The ceremony is divided into three parts. The first is the blessing of the palms, and the prayers used are beautiful and instructive. The palms are distributed and should be kept by the faithful during the year for a protection to their persons and their dwellings. The second part is the procession. The priest represents Christ, and the palm branches are carried in memory of those which the people bore in their hands and threw down before our Saviour when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On the return of the procession you will notice, my brethren, that the church door is locked and the procession cannot enter; voices are heard singing within the church, and those outside take up the refrain. The locked door is a symbol of the gates of heaven shut against sinful men; the voices are those of the angels who greet the Redeemer: "Glory, praise, and honor be to Thee, O Christ, our King, our Saviour!" The door is struck with the cross and opens, representing the opening of heaven to men by the victory of the Cross.

Though this is a day of triumph, yet during the Mass, the third part of the ceremony, the account of the Passion from St. Matthew's gospel is read. This reminds us of the fickleness of the Jews, who will in a few days clamor for their King's life-blood. On Tuesday and Wednesday the Passion is read from the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke.

On Maundy Thursday all the touching circumstances of the Last Supper and the institution of the Blessed Sacrament are reproduced in a most striking and moving form. To honor the Blessed Sacrament, Mass is celebrated with all possible splendor. The color of the vestments is white, the altar is decorated, and with joyous ringing of bells and with the glad tones of the organ the Angelic Hymn, *Gloria in excelsis,* is sung. When this is finished the bells and the organ are once more silent. The Mass goes on as usual, but we may notice one significant omission: the Kiss of Peace is not given, out of detestation for the crime of Judas who, on this day, profaned this sign of friendship. Throughout the world loving souls will gather round the altar to receive their paschal Communion on this day, making

some reparation to Jesus for the treachery of which He was the victim.

The service of Good Friday is most realistic. During the first part of the service lessons from the prophets are read which refer to the Passion, and then the account of the Passion itself is read from St. John's gospel. Prayers follow, in which the Church, joining herself to Jesus upon the Cross, intercedes for the necessities of the whole world. The Celebrant now takes off his chasuble and holds aloft the cross for the veneration of the people. Unveiling the upper part of the cross, he sings: "Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung the salvation of the world." Then both priest and people, kneeling, sing "Come let us adore."

Unveiling the right arm of the cross and raising his voice, the priest once more sings the salutation of the cross and holds it up for the veneration of the faithful; and still a third time is this repeated, when the cross is completely uncovered. The people then advance and kiss the feet of the crucifix, whilst the choir sings the touching "reproaches." On this day so vivid is the remembrance of the sacrifice of Calvary that the Church will not permit the renewal of it by consecration. On Maundy Thursday two Hosts were consecrated, one being consumed by the priest and the second kept at the "altar of repose." To-day the Sacred Host is brought in solemn procession to the High Altar, and during the Mass of the "Presanctified," which has no consecration and differs in many ways from the ordinary Mass, the Host is received by the Celebrant. Vespers follow immediately, and on their completion the altars are stripped and the church is left desolate. In former days the faithful spent Holy Saturday in mourning for their Lord, who lay in the tomb awaiting His resurrection. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was not offered up, not even a Mass of the Presanctified. But since the eleventh century the character of the day has changed: it is the precursor of Easter, and the Mass has come to be considered an anticipation of Sunday and of our Lord's resurrection rather than the sacrifice of Holy Saturday, when His mangled body lay in the tomb. It

it therefore a part of the feast of Easter, and its liturgy does not come within the scope of our subject.

It is impossible to speak adequately here of the liturgy of this great week. I have sketched for you, my brethren, in outline only, some of the ceremonies. By devoutly following the liturgy we are united to our suffering Lord, our hard hearts are broken by the dread words of the prophets and of David. We hear Jesus Himself disclosing His anguish of soul, the Church of God denouncing the deicides, the ruin of Jerusalem foretold. We have wounded the Sacred Heart by our sins, we have crucified our Saviour and we must weep in humility and penance if we would escape the sentence of condemnation.

INFLUENCE OF THE LITURGY

And this, my dear brethren, was the spirit of more fervent days. In earlier times the whole Christian world gave itself up to this spirit of penance. It was to those ages so full of faith, the "great week," or the "painful week." We read of fervent souls pushing their fasting to the utmost limits of human endurance. We are told that some would fast the whole week, others for two, three, or four consecutive days, and it was the common practice to abstain from food from the evening of Maundy Thursday till Easter Sunday morning. All work was suspended, the people flocked to the churches and followed with loving hearts and tearful eyes each step of their suffering Lord as set forth in the liturgy. The prisons were flung open, slaves were freed, abundant alms were given to the poor, and war and quarrels were forgotten.

What an immense influence upon society the liturgical life of the Church and her penitential discipline must have had. Alas! my brethren, the world has in its foolish pride and self-sufficiency swept aside as "out-of-date" all national customs springing from this active remembrance of the Incarnation. The "Reign of Christ," which was universal at these solemn times, has been abolished. Christ is dethroned and the idol of false "Liberty" is raised up in His place. Men used to do penance for their sins, to weep over the wounds of their Saviour and strengthen themselves against their proud and

sensual temptations. Now men withdraw all barriers and allow the flood of human wickedness to devastate the world. What can save modern society, my brethren, except the salutary discipline of penance imposed by the Church, and the humility of heart and remembrance of the Redeemer taught by her liturgy?

CONCLUSION

Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, be encouraged generously to undergo the salutary penance of this holy season. We shall gain the proper dispositions of soul by keeping close to Jesus Christ, and by living the life of the Church, thinking her thoughts, using her words, and filling our hearts with her sentiments; and these we shall find in her liturgy. If this labor of the purification of the soul is painful, we must remember that "God chastiseth every son that He receiveth," and that we cannot share the glories of His Resurrection unless we follow Him in the days of His penance and His passion.

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SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

SUBJECT

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: WHAT IT FORBIDS

TEXT

This is the will of God . . . that no man overreach, nor circumvent his brother in business: because the Lord is the avenger of all these things. – 1 Thess. iv. 3, 6.

Analysis

Introduction. Shortly after St. Paul had founded the Church at Thessalonica, the modern Saloniki, the Jews, who were ever trying to oppose and undo the work of the Apostle, drove him out, and he proceeded then to Athens. From this latter city he addressed the present Epistle to the Thessalonians about the year 53. The purpose of the Apostle in writing to the new converts was to encourage them to be faithful to the teachings he had given them and to avoid the sins of their former lives as Gentiles, in particular the vices of impurity, dishonesty and stealing. He points out to them that their calling as Christians obliges them to a higher standard of conduct than that practiced by the society in which they lived. In the modern world dishonesty in business is perhaps even more prevalent than in the days of St. Paul, with this difference that to-day it is often looked upon as shrewdness, business ability, experienced wisdom, and the like. All those, however, who are in any way guilty of this sin should remember the warning words of the great Apostle: "The Lord is the avenger of all these things."

I. The nature and gravity of theft. 1. Stealing is the unjust violation of another's right to property, *i.e.*, of another's right to acquire, possess, enjoy and retain temporal goods. 2. The right to property springs from the natural law, and is sanctioned by God in the seventh Commandment. Since human nature tends to be ambitious, covetous, and avaricious, it is necessary, to avoid

unending strife and turmoil, that individuals be invested with exclusive property rights. The radical fallacy of Communism and Socialism is that they are opposed to the nature of things, and consequently impossible of realization in this world. The only species of Communism that is feasible on earth is that which is voluntarily practiced by the members of religious communities. 3. Theft is in itself a grave sin, because it violates a serious Commandment of God (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10); it is an injury to God and to man. 4. Theft, however, becomes a venial sin when the injury done is only slight. The lightness of the injury depends upon circumstances, *e.g.*, a dollar stolen from the very poor would be a grave injury, whereas the same amount taken from the rich would be only a slight offence. Again, petty thefts and small cheating are trifling matters when considered singly; but when they are intentionally continued, or when one plans to continue them, they become serious sins, if they total a great amount.

II. The various kinds of theft. 1. Theft is not only the unjust taking of things from another's purse, pocket or home, but has a much wider extension. There are three ways of stealing: (a) by the unjust taking of what belongs to another; (b) by the unjust keeping of what belongs to another; (c) by unjust damage to another's property. 2. Unjust taking of another's property may be perpetrated in three ways: (a) by *theft* strictly considered, *i.e.*, the secret taking of what belongs to another against the owner's reasonable wishes, such as is done by pickpockets, sneak thieves, employees who are taking secret compensation, wives, children, and servants who waste household goods, and the like; (b) by *rapine* or *violence*, as is done by highway robbers, by officials who extort bribes, by employers who force their employees to take less than their due; (c) by *fraud* and *cheating*, as happens in the case of laborers who waste their time, in the case of buyers and sellers that cheat one another in various ways, in the case of profiteers who take advantage of public needs to enrich themselves unduly, and in the case of dishonest gambling. 3. Unjust keeping of another's property takes

place when a person keeps something he has found, not trying to find the owner, or when, knowingly he retains what belongs to another even though he acquired it in good faith, or when he refuses to pay his just debts. 4. Unjust damage to another's property happens when a person through his own fault causes loss to another. This sin is committed, not only by those who actually cause the damage, but also by all those who sinfully co-operate in it.

Conclusion. 1. We should all carefully examine our consciences in this serious matter, since it is so easy to be deceived by self-interest and the false maxims of the world. 2. We should remember that ill-gotten goods bring upon us in the end unhappiness, misfortune, and the curse of God (Zach. v. 4). 3. "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26).

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Seventh Commandment

Thou shalt not steal.[1]

Necessity of instruction on this commandment

In the early ages of the Church, it was customary to impress on the minds of the faithful the nature and force of this Commandment. This we learn from the reproof uttered by the Apostle against some who were most earnest in deterring others from vices, in which they themselves were found freely to indulge: "Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest not thyself: thou that preachest that men should not steal, stealest."[2] The salutary effect of such instructions was, not only to correct a vice then very prevalent, but also to repress quarrels, litigation, and other evils which generally grow out of theft. Since in these our days men are unhappily addicted to the same vices, with their consequent misfortunes and evils, the pastor, following the example of the holy Fathers and

[1] Exod. xx. 15. [2] Rom. ii. 21.

Doctors, should strongly insist on this point and explain with diligent care the force and meaning of this Commandment.

THIS COMMANDMENT A PROOF OF THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS US AND A CLAIM ON OUR GRATITUDE

In the first place the pastor should exercise care and industry in declaring the infinite love of God for man. Not satisfied with having fenced round, so to say, our lives, our persons, our reputation, by means of the two Commandments, "thou shalt not kill," "thou shalt not commit adultery," God defends and places a guard over our property, by adding the prohibition, "Thou shalt not steal." These words can have no other meaning than that which we indicated above when speaking of the other Commandments. They declare that God forbids our worldly goods, which are placed under His protection, to be taken away or injured by anyone.[3]

Our gratitude to God, the author of this law, should be in proportion to the greatness of the benefit the law confers upon us. Now since the truest test of gratitude and the best means of returning thanks to God, consists not alone in lending a willing ear to His precepts, but, also, in obeying them, the faithful are to be animated and encouraged to a strict observance of this Commandment.

DIVISION OF THE COMMANDMENT

Like the preceding Commandments, this one also is divided into two parts. The first, which prohibits theft, is mentioned expressly; while the spirit and force of the second, which enforces kindliness and liberality, are implied in the first part.

WHAT IS MEANT BY "STEAL"

We shall begin with the prohibitory part of the Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." It is to be observed, that by the word "steal" is understood not only the taking away of anything from its rightful owner, privately and without his con-

[3] St. Thomas, Ia. IIae., q. 100. art. 3; IIa. IIae., q. 122. art. 6.

sent; but also the possession of that which belongs to another, contrary to the will, although not without the knowledge, of the true owner; else we are prepared to say that He who prohibits theft does not also prohibit robbery, which is accomplished by violence and injustice, whereas, according to St. Paul, "extortioners shall not possess the kingdom of God,"[4] and their very company and ways should be shunned.[5]

But though robbery is a greater sin than theft, inasmuch as it not only deprives another of his property, but also offers violence and insult to him;[6] yet it cannot be a matter of surprise that the divine prohibition is expressed under the milder name of "steal" instead of that of "rob." There was good reason for this, since theft is more general and of wider extent than robbery, a crime which only they can commit who are superior to their neighbor in brute force. Furthermore, it is obvious that when lesser crimes are forbidden, greater enormities of the same sort are also prohibited.[7]

VARIOUS KINDS OF STEALING

The unjust possession and use of what belongs to another are expressed by different names, according to the diversity of the objects stolen. To take anything private from a private individual is called "theft"; from the public, "peculation." To enslave a freeman or appropriate the slave of another is called "man-stealing." To steal anything sacred is called "sacrilege"—a crime most enormous and sinful, yet so common in our days, that what piety and wisdom had appropriated to the divine worship, to the support of the ministers of religion, and to the use of the poor, is employed in satisfying the cravings of individual avarice, and converted into a means of ministering to the worst passions.

But, besides actual theft, the will and desire are also forbidden by the law of God. The law is spiritual and concerns the soul, the source of our thoughts and designs. "From the

[4] 1 Cor. vi. 10.
[5] See Aug. q. 71. in Exod.; quoted in 32. q. 4. c. meretrices.
[6] 1 Cor. v. 10.
[7] St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 66. aa. 4, 9; 14, q. 4. c. pœnale.

heart," says our Lord, "come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies." [8]

GRIEVOUSNESS OF THE SIN OF THEFT

The grievousness of the sin of theft is sufficiently seen by the light of natural reason alone, for it is a violation of justice which gives to every man his own. The distribution and allotment of property, fixed from the beginning by the law of nations and confirmed by human and divine laws, must be considered as inviolable, and each one must be allowed secure possession of what he has justly acquired, unless we wish the overthrow of human society. Hence these words of the Apostle, "Neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God." [9]

The long train of evils which theft entails upon society, are a proof at once of its mischievousness and enormity. It gives rise to hasty and rash judgments, engenders hatred, originates enmities, and sometimes subjects the innocent to cruel condemnation.

What shall we say of the necessity imposed by God on all of satisfying for the injury done? "Without restitution," says St. Augustine, "the sin is not forgiven." [10] The difficulty of making such restitution, on the part of those who have been in the habit of enriching themselves with their neighbor's property, we may learn not only from personal observation and reflection, but also from the testimony of the prophet Habacuc: "Woe to him that heapeth together what is not his own. How long also doth he load himself with thick clay?" [11] The possession of other men's property the prophet calls "thick clay," because it is difficult to emerge and extricate one's self from ill-gotten goods.

There are so many kinds of stealing that it is difficult to enumerate them all; but since the others can be reduced to theft and robbery, it will be sufficient to speak of these two. To inspire the faithful with a detestation of such crimes and

[8] Matt. xv. 19.
[9] Cor. vi. 10.
[10] Epist. liv.
[11] Habac. ii. 6.

to deter them from their commission, the pastor should use all care and diligence.

VARIOUS KINDS OF THEFT

But to proceed. They are also guilty of theft who buy stolen goods, or retain the property of others, whether found, seized, or pilfered. "If you have found, and not restored," says St. Augustine, "you have stolen."[12] If the true owner cannot however, be discovered, whatever is found should go to the poor.[13] If the finder refuse to make restitution, he gives evident proof that, were it in his power, he would make no scruple of stealing all that he could lay his hands on.

Those who, in buying or selling, have recourse to fraud and lying, involve themselves in the same guilt. The Lord will avenge their trickery. Those who sell bad and adulterated goods as real and genuine or who defraud the purchasers by weight, measure, number, or rule, are guilty of a species of theft still more criminal and unjust. It is written, "Thou shalt not have divers weights in thy bag."[14] "Do not any unjust thing," says Leviticus, "in judgment, in rule, in weight or in measure. Let the balance be just, and the weights equal, the bushel just, and the sextary equal."[15] And elsewhere it is written "Divers weights are an abomination before the Lord; a deceitful balance is not good."[16]

It is, also, a downright theft, when laborers and artisans exact full wages from those to whom they have not given just and due labor. Again, dishonest servants and stewards are no better than thieves, nay they are more detestable than other thieves; against these everything may be locked, while against a pilfering servant nothing in a house can be secure by bolt or lock.

They, also, who extort money under false pretences, or by deceitful words, may be said to steal, and their guilt is aggravated since they add falsehood to theft.

[12] Lib. 50. hom. 9; de verbis Apost. serm. 19.

[13] It is unnecessary to remind the learned reader that human laws may affect this decision.—T.

[14] Deut. xxv. 13. [15] Lev. xix. 35, 36. [16] Prov. xx. 23.

Persons charged with offices of public or private trust, who altogether neglect, or but indifferently perform their duties, while they enjoy the salary and emoluments of such offices, are also to be reckoned in the number of thieves.

To enumerate the various other modes of theft, invented by the ingenuity of avarice, which is versed in all the arts of making money, would be a tedious and, as already said, a most difficult task.

The pastor, therefore, will next come to treat of robbery, which is the second general division of these crimes. First, he should admonish the faithful to bear in mind the precept of the Apostle: "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and the snare of the devil";[17] and never to forget the words of the Redeemer: "All things whatsoever you will that men do to you, do you also to them";[18] and always to bear in mind the admonition of Tobias: "See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another."[19]

VARIOUS FORMS OF ROBBERY

Robbery is more comprehensive than theft. Those who pay not the laborer his hire are guilty of robbery and are exhorted to repentance by St. James in these words: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries which shall come upon you." He adds the reason for their repentance: "Behold the hire of the laborers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."[20] This sort of robbery is strongly condemned in Leviticus,[21] Deuteronomy,[22] Malachy,[23] and Tobias.[24]

Among those who are guilty of robbery are also included persons who do not pay, or who turn to other uses or appropriate to themselves, customs, taxes, tithes, and such revenues, which are owed to the Church or civil authorities.

To this class also belong usurers, the most cruel and relent-

[17] 1 Tim. vi. 9.
[18] Matt. vii. 12.
[19] Tob. iv. 26.
[20] James v. 1, 4.
[21] Lev. xix. 13.
[22] Deut. xxiv. 14.
[23] Mal. iii. 5.
[24] Tob. iv. 15.

less of extortioners, who by their exorbitant rates of interest, plunder and destroy the poor. Whatever is received above the principal, be it money, or anything else that may be purchased or estimated by money, is usury; for it is written in Ezechiel: "Thou hast taken usury and increase," [25] and in Luke our Lord says: "Lend hoping for nothing thereby." [26] Even among the pagans usury was always considered a most grievous and odious crime. Hence the saying: "If you ask: What is usury? I reply: What is murder?" And, indeed, he who lends at usury sells the same thing twice, or sells that which has no real existence.[27]

Corrupt judges, whose decisions are venal, and who, bought over by money or other bribes, decide against the just claims of the poor and needy, also commit robbery.

Those who defraud their creditors, who deny their just debts, and also those who purchase goods on their own or on another's credit, with a promise to pay for them at a certain time, and do not keep their word, are guilty of the same crime of robbery. And it is an aggravation of their guilt that, in consequence of their want of punctuality and their fraud, prices are raised to the no small injury of the public. To such persons David alludes when he says: "The sinner shall borrow and not pay again." [28]

But what shall we say of those rich men who exact with rigor what they lend to the poor, even though the latter are not able to pay them? and of those who take as security even the necessary clothing of the unfortunate debtors? Such men defy the divine prohibition: "If thou take of thy neighbor a garment in pledge, thou shalt give it him again before sunset, for that same is the only thing wherewith he is covered, the cloth-

[25] Ezech. xxii. 12. and xviii. 8.

[26] Luke vi. 33.

[27] On usury see 14. q. 1, q. 4. passim; de usuris in the Decretals; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 78; Amb., lib. de Tob. c. 14.

Note.—Money, *as money*, i.e., as a mere medium of exchange is essentially unproductive and interest on it is unjust; but to-day money is also *capital*, i.e., an instrument of production and he who lends it has the right to a share in its profits by charging a reasonable rate of interest. (See Tanq., *Theol. Mor.* III. # # 902, 903; Cronin, *The Science of Ethics*, II. pp. 331-334).—Editors.

[28] Ps. xxxvi. 21.

ing of his body, neither hath he any other to sleep in: if he cry to me I will hear him, because I am compassionate." [29] Their rigorous exaction is justly termed "rapacity," and therefore "robbery." [30]

Among those whom the holy Fathers pronounced guilty of robbery are persons who, in times of scarcity, hoard up their corn, thus rendering supplies scarcer and dearer. This holds good with regard to all necessaries of life and sustenance. These are they against whom Solomon utters this execration: "He that hideth up corn, shall be cursed among the people." [31] Such persons the pastor will admonish of their guilt, and will reprove with more than ordinary freedom; he will explain to them at length the punishments which await such sins.—So much for what the seventh Commandment forbids.

EXCUSES OF THEFT

As there are not wanting those who would even excuse their thefts, these are to be admonished that God will accept no excuse for sin; and that their excuses, far from extenuating, serve only to aggravate their guilt.

I. MAINTENANCE OF ONE'S RANK

How insufferable the perversity of those men of exalted rank, who excuse themselves for taking what belongs to others by alleging, that they act not from cupidity or avarice, but from a desire to maintain the grandeur of their families, and the station of their ancestors, whose repute and dignity must fall, if not upheld by the possession of another man's property. Of this harmful error they are to be disabused; and are to be convinced, that the only means to preserve and augment their wealth and to enhance the glory of their ancestors is to obey the will of God and observe His Commandments. Once His will and Commandments are contemned, the stability of property, no matter how securely settled, is overturned; kings are

[29] Exod. xxii. 26, 27.
[30] See decretal. lib. 3. tit. 21; Amb., lib. 5. de offic. c. 6.
[31] Prov. xi. 6.

dethroned, and hurled from the highest pinnacle of earthly grandeur; while the humblest individuals in society or men towards whom they cherished the most implacable hatred, are sometimes called by God to occupy their place.

The intensity of the divine wrath, kindled by such cruel injustice, God Himself declares in these words, which are recorded in Isaias: "The princes are faithless, companions of thieves; they all love bribes; they run after rewards. Therefore, saith the Lord, the God of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: Ah! I will comfort myself over my adversaries; and I will be revenged of my enemies; and I will turn my hand to thee, and I will clean purge away thy dross." [32]

2. THE PLEA OF GREATER EASE AND ELEGANCE

Some there are, who plead in justification of such conduct, not the ambition of maintaining hereditary splendor and ancestral glory, but a desire of acquiring the means of living in greater ease and elegance. Such false excuses are also to be exposed and refuted; and it should be shown how impious are the words and conduct of those who prefer their own ease to the will and the glory of God, which by neglecting His Commandments we offend extremely. And yet what real advantage can there be in theft? Of how many very serious evils is it not the source? "Confusion and repentance," says Ecclesiasticus, "is upon a thief." [33] But even though no temporal punishment overtake the thief, he offers an insult to the divine name, opposes the most holy will of God, and contemns His salutary precepts; from such contempt result all error, all dishonesty, all impiety.

3. STEALING FROM THE RICH

But do we not sometimes hear the thief contend that he is not guilty of sin, because he steals from the rich and the

[32] See C. of Trent. sess. 22. decret. de reform. cap. 11; c. 13. 22; C. of Paris, I, c. 1; C. of Tours II, c. 25; C. of Orleans V, c. 15; C. of Orleans III; C. of Mainz, cap 6. 11; C. of Worms, c. 75; C. Aachen, c. 88; 1.2. quæst.

[33] Eccl. v. 17.

wealthy, who, in his mind, not only suffer no injury, but do not even feel the loss? Such an excuse is as wretched as its tendency is baneful.

4. STEALING THROUGH HABIT

Others imagine that they should be excused, because they have contracted such a habit of stealing as not to be able to gain an easy victory over the temptation, or to desist from the practice. If such persons listen not to the admonition of the Apostle: "He that stole, let him now steal no more," [34] let them recollect that one day, whether they like it or not, they will become accustomed to an eternity of torments.

5. STEALING BECAUSE OF FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY

Some excuse themselves by saying that it was impossible to resist the favorable opportunity that presented itself. The proverb is well known: "Those who are not thieves are made so by opportunity." Such persons are to be disabused of their wrong idea by reminding them that it is our duty to resist every evil propensity. If we yield instant obedience to every inordinate impulse, what measure, what limits will there be to crime and disorder? Such an excuse, therefore, is of the lowest character, or rather is an avowal of a complete want of restraint and justice. To say that you do not commit sin, because you have no opportunity of sinning, is almost to acknowledge that you are always prepared to sin when opportunity offers.

6. STEALING FOR REVENGE

There are some who say that they steal in order to gratify revenge, having themselves suffered the same injury from others. In answer to such offenders, the pastor will urge the unlawfulness of returning injury for injury; that no person can be a judge in his own cause; and that still less can it be lawful to punish one man for the injustice done you by another.

[34] Eph. iv. 28.

7. STEALING TO PAY DEBTS

Finally, some find a sufficient justification of theft in their own embarrassments, alleging that they are overwhelmed with debt, which they cannot pay off otherwise than by theft. Such persons should be given to understand that no debt presses more heavily than that from which, each day of our lives, we pray to be released in these words of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our debts." Hence it is the height of folly to be willing to increase our debt to God by sin, in order to be able to pay our debts to men. It is much better to be consigned to an earthly prison than to be cast into the prison of hell; it is by far a greater evil to be condemned by the judgment of God, than by that of man. Hence, under such trying circumstances, it becomes our duty to have recourse to the assistance and mercy of God, that in His goodness He may relieve us from all our difficulties.

There are also other excuses for theft, which, however, the judicious and zealous pastor will not find it difficult to meet, so that thus he may one day be blessed with a people who are "followers of good works." [35]

Sermon

Extravagance, Gambling, and Theft

BY THE REV. FRANCIS M. HARVEY

Be not anxious for goods unjustly gotten, for they shall not profit thee in the day of calamity and revenge. For confusion and repentance is upon a thief.—Eccles. v. 10.

EXTRAVAGANCE

Our day is characterized by the rapid increase of material wealth. For the first time in history the accumulation of wealth has become a science. We do not mean to complain of this increase. Like all of God's gifts, wealth, even great wealth, is beneficent, and is the outpouring of that same fatherly goodness that bestows upon us spiritual grace.

[35] Tit. II. 14.

There is, however, an unhappy result of this great wealth; the vast increase of luxurious living. And not only is this among the very rich, but among those who are far below in the social scale. Self-indulgence has become an almost universal social law. Vast sums are spent on mere eating and drinking. You hear men eagerly discussing the discovery of some new place at which some special delicacy may be secured. Men now compete with one another in the splendor or novelty of their entertainments. Immense sums are expended for woman's dress; large fortunes are made by those who cater to public amusement, and a great army of entertainers are supported in every city.

Unfortunately this luxurious temper is far from being confined to those outside the Church. Many who profess the Gospel of the Crucified contradict the principles of that Gospel in their daily lives, and the result is that we live in an atmosphere of pollution wherein the poison of extravagant living, with its deadly evils, is drawn into our blood, and a degenerate race is reared up to be a menace to society and a blot on our civilization.

CONSEQUENCES OF EXTRAVAGANCE

This mad thirst for enjoyment it is that leads so many of our young people into extravagance and its attendant evils. We will confine ourselves to the consideration of one of the sad results of this pleasure-loving spirit of our day, the violation of the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal"; a commandment which comes to us now partly drowned by sounds of revelry, the cries of a degenerate commercialism and the platitudes of the worldly wise. But the commandment was first given amid the thunders of Sinai, and in the ear of God and of God's Church those thunders are still echoing, and, as of old, sound a warning anathema to the sinner. Heaven and earth may pass away, may change from age to age in their passing, but not one syllable of God's law shall pass, not one jot of His penalties shall fail.

The first step in this downward path is extravagance—very venial in appearance, like all first wrongward steps—but con-

demned by the sure instinct that is in every uncorrupted heart. Extravagance prepares the way for thievery, just as surely as immodest words and words of double meaning are the forerunners of debauchery. It begets the feverish longing for money, which is the spirit of gambling, and gambling is in reality an ambition to get something for nothing, and finds its ultimate, legitimate expression in common theft.

CAUSES OF EXTRAVAGANCE

If we would purify society of this vice we must set our faces strongly against this spirit of extravagance that obtains so largely to-day. How many a young man, fascinated by the pleasure-seeking life about him, is lured to spiritual and to social destruction! He begins by spending more than he can afford upon dress, theater-going, food and drink, and the myriad indulgences that entice on every side. To pay for these luxuries he must retrench expenditures that duty demands of him. His contribution to the support of home is minimized indefinitely, those who should be nearest and dearest to him may be in want of many little comforts, even of certain necessities, which ordinarily it would be in his power and should be his pleasure to supply; but the spirit of extravagance has transformed his generosity into selfishness and his sense of duty into an irritation at all restraint. This irritation renders himself and those about him wretched, and estranges him more and more from home and its salutary influences. Yet he who sins in this way will deny that he sins at all. He will not open his eyes to the injustice of which he is guilty. He forgets that he owes a debt to his parents that even his best efforts can never adequately repay. Under God they have given him the gift of physical life, have toiled that he might be fitted for his position in society, have denied themselves many comforts for his sake, have year by year piled up a debt against him which they would be the last to demand, but which he should be the first to pay.

What is true of a large number of young men is equally true of many young women and with even sadder results. Extravagance in dress is not even regarded as a venial offense in

morals. It masquerades under the name of "a proper pride," "decent regard for appearances," "self-respect," or any of the well-sounding phrases with which we cover our follies and our sins. How many bitter heart-burnings are caused by the extravagant girl? How her selfish indulgence grows by what it feeds upon, and ill-temper gains more and more possession of her character. Happy is she if her moral sense does not become blunted, and she wake to find that her extravagance and love of display have not yet led her into the path of sordid worldliness, whence there is little hope of returning.

Much of the sorrow and heart-burning that arise in a family from the spendthrift habits of youths and maidens would have been saved parents had the children been properly trained. It is no uncommon thing—indeed, it is in some places almost the rule—to find more money lavished on the clothing of children than is spent on that of the parents. People in ordinary circumstances deem it proper to dress their children as though they were the offspring of the wealthy. What wonder if these children learn to look down upon their fellows who are less splendidly arrayed; if pride and vanity grow up rankly in their hearts; if thus are reared generations of degenerate men and frivolous women.

Extravagance is one of the most insidious and most dangerous foes to character and to society. Society is built upon thrift. The careful toiler, industrious in his life, temperate in his manners, is the main trunk of the tree of civilization, supporting and sustaining the branches of science and the fair foliage of refinement and art. Let extravagance eat its way into the trunk, and the whole tree sickens and dies. The individual who becomes tainted with extravagance is in a fit condition to catch any of the moral diseases that afflict mankind. Extravagance, as we are considering it, is an unreasonable expenditure of money, a going beyond the bounds laid down by common sense, duty to our fellows, and the law of God. To push aside reason as the guiding principle in one department of our lives opens the way to its expulsion from all the others. The vice, too, looks so fair, appeals so strongly to our self-love, and so quickly wins the applause of the unthinking,

masquerading in the garb of generosity and kindliness, that one is loath to part with it. But if you note carefully the extravagant man, you will find that he is not really generous, nor kind; he is not even just. His expenditures are upon himself, his follies and his foibles. In his commercial dealings he is always hard or mean, and often tricky and unjust. Extravagance is a form of selfishness, and the man who is most free-handed in catering to his own enjoyments, usually has an abundance of unpaid bills to his account.

Here is where extravagance becomes a breach of the Seventh Commandment. Right reason and morality demand that we pay our debts promptly and meet our obligations to the best of our ability. Extravagance is by its very nature opposed to right reason, and its presence blights our sense of justice and gives us essentially the same outlook upon life as that possessed by the gamester and the thief.

GAMBLING

This view-point which it gives us, this atmosphere which it creates, is most dangerous. The life of extravagant luxury, that is more rife to-day than ever before in the world's history, has given us a whole race of men who are living by their wits, as it is called. Get-rich-quick schemes are a feature of every-day life. What are called questionable business methods—a euphemism for thievery—are scarcely noticed. Practical bribery and corruption support a great horde of these same ingenious gentlemen. And this class is not condemned by public opinion as were the banditti and adventurers of old whose descendants they are. Our whole social structure is infested with these vermin that make our laws their protection. They are able to commit the most flagrant dishonesty, and yet stand legally absolved. They can do whatever is criminally wrong that has profit in it, and do it so skilfully that legal measures are powerless against them. As has been truly said: "Men profess but little esteem for the blunt, necessitous thief who robs and runs away; but for the gentleman who can break the whole of God's law so adroitly as to leave man's unbroken, who can indulge in such conservative stealing that

his fellowmen award him a rank among honest men for the excessive skill of his dishonesty, there are ample opportunities for following the ways of the gay and extravagant."

This gambling spirit, raised by the luxury and extravagance of present life, is growing steadily more powerful. Reputable business men are forced to be more and more on their guard against it in their employees. The questions asked of young aspirants to good business positions are becoming most particular as regards the presence of the vice of gambling, while a known fondness for card-playing and races will shut a man out of positions of trust, no matter how high the bonds by which he is guaranteed. We cannot call the managers of our business houses fanatics; cannot claim that they are animated by quixotic moral ideals. It is not "some far off divine event" that they look to, and in whose name they strive to shut their doors against those tainted with the gambling tendency, but the hard, practical realization that the gambler and the thief are one, and that it is but a question of time before the gamester is behind prison bars or a fugitive from justice.

See by what necessary links this spirit of extravagance and gambling are connected. The young man of extravagant tastes borrows to supply the supposed needs of the present hour. Soon his wages are pledged from week to week and from month to month. By and by the loan office is his only willing creditor. Now the burden of debt grows almost unbearable and he strives to shift it by delays, by lying excuses, by false promises. He learns all the low tricks of concealment and evasion that are used to avoid the payment of honest debt. The mind becomes fevered with winding schemes and projects, the heart polluted, the conscience befouled. Perhaps the races will help him out, some one suggests. Stories of brilliant fortunes made in a day dazzle him. Here is an opportunity to throw off the burden of debt, to feel he can look honest men in the face—and for the moment he acknowledges that he is not honest himself—but above all, to continue in that primrose path for which he has sacrified his honor. He plays the races —his last dollar is gone, the fever of the game is in his blood, the dread of ruin is before him; he must play now, he says.

He borrows desperately, with lies of wondrous ingenuity. His mind is filled with dreams of suddenly acquired wealth; he broods over scheme after scheme of unlawful gain—timidly, perhaps at first, but with increasing boldness, till he looks at dishonesty face to face, and thinks only of safety. Many examples of brilliant, undetected fraud, of knavery covered by cunning and crowned by success, come to his mind. Closer and closer he draws to the siren of dishonor. His judgment is warped by what he considers his pressing necessities; his imagination is on fire with the promised enjoyment of successful achievement, and he finally compromises with his conscience; says he will not steal but will borrow some of the funds entrusted to his care. A new horde of lying expedients must now be resorted to. Accounts are falsified; wrong entries made; false papers are made out and filed; perjured oaths are given, and the stream of gold begins to flow freely and sweeps him on in its intoxicating flood, on to the rapids of ruin and of shame. There are waking moments of nightmare anguish, of frenzied hope that some benignant fortune will stretch a hand to pluck him from this maelstrom of dishonor. He takes desperate risks at cards and at the races, but inevitable exposure and degradation follow him and at last he stands exposed, a detected thief, a man who has been false to himself, false to his trust, false to his God.

This is not an isolated case. Scarce a sun rises but this sad drama is re-enacted. With a persistency that is appalling, the game is played by some new fool who puts his puny ingenuity against the tried wisdom and shrewdness of human society.

But this is not all. Are you aware how this spirit of gambling permeates every walk of life? Not only are our cities pitted with pool-rooms and secret gambling dens, but gambling is open, flaunting itself on our very streets. Is there no one to raise a voice against this street corner gambling that disgraces our Sunday mornings? The way to Mass too often lies through a crowd of young men who are disgracing themselves and the day by throwing dice or indulging in one of the many ingenious forms of corner gambling. God knows they are in need of the grace of attending Mass and instruc-

tion, but the call of the dice-box is in their blood, and the sound of the church bell falls silent before it. There they play with the wages that should go to the support of those at home, gambling away, perhaps, the comforts and necessities of aged parents, gambling away the promise of their early manhood, gambling away their hope of future success, gambling away the safety of their immortal souls.

THEFT

Of open direct theft much need not be said. Its heinousness is fairly well recognized. What needs to be thoroughly insisted upon is that sinful extravagance and gambling are of a piece with theft as surely as impure words and impure thoughts are of a piece with the most flagrant violations of the Sixth Commandment.

But theft is not always open and direct. How often in the day is God's commandment broken by the dishonest tradesman who gives short weight, or who charges exorbitant prices? How many children pilfer from their parents, and how many parents make light of such pilfering, forgetful that the child is a criminal in the sight of God! "He that stealeth anything from his father, or from his mother, and saith, This is no sin, is the partner of a murderer." How often do we see workmen shirking their work, or doing it with wilful negligence? They sell eight hours of labor and give five or six. What are such men but thieves, who are bound before the tribunal of God's justice. This is a condition of affairs that is becoming appallingly common. It seems that the better are the terms obtained by labor the more prevalent grows this theft of time and service. Men selfishly disregard the interests of the employer to whose service they have bound themselves: but call to mind the saying of St. Luke: "He that is unjust in that which is little is unjust also in that which is greater. If you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

On the other hand, we have those who defraud the workmen of their rightful wages, taking advantage of their necessity or ignorance to cheat them into an agreement to work for less than their labor is worth; who make an unnecessary delay in paying

their wages or defraud them entirely. These are "sins that cry to heaven for vengeance."

CONCLUSION

Our guiding principle, in regard to this most solemn command of the Most High, is that whatever works an injustice to our neighbor, that defrauds, circumvents, or takes advantage of him in any way, is an offense against him, and against God, and binds us absolutely to restitution.

The Sacred Scriptures ring with repeated warnings against injustice, fraud and theft. "This is the curse that goeth forth over the earth; for every thief shall be judged as is there written. I will bring forth this curse, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall come to the house of the thief; and it shall remain in the midst of his house and shall consume it, with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." "You do wrong and defraud. . . . Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God?" "Be not anxious for goods unjustly gotten, for they shall not profit thee in the day of calamity and revenge—for confusion and repentance is upon a thief." Again and again we are reminded that our God is the God of justice and will suffer no infringement of His law to go unpunished. Again and again sounds the solemn warning to fly fraud and iniquitous dealing. Like all the stern commands of God they spring from His Fatherly love of us. He is jealous for His children with a holy, paternal jealousy; demanding what is best for them, and resenting any loss of their truth and worth. He created us for Himself, that our hearts might find joy and rest in Him. What room is there for God in that heart which is filled with restless longing for the things of earth, so filled, that loss of honor is deemed a small thing if but the craving for earthly possessions be satisfied?

Let us remember that it is our duty as Catholics not only to set ourselves sternly against all cheating, bribery and swindling—that is expected even of the heathen—but to be outspoken in our condemnation of the extravagant luxury of our day, and the spirit of gambling that is ripe in our land. What have we, who were purchased by the passion and the

Cross of the Man of Sorrows and of Poverty to do with softness and effeminacy, with the heedless extravagance which makes a god of self whilst Jesus in the person of His poor is dying at our gates, with the fevered excitement and desperate longing of the gambling den, or the secret thief whose "sins cry to heaven for vengeance"? Let us kneel in spirit before that Cross, see the price that has been paid for us, realize the heavy debt that lies upon us, and strive to pay some small portion of that debt by scrupulous regard to all the claims of God's justice.

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THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

SUBJECT

THE NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENTS

TEXT

But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: . . . For know ye this, and understand that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person (which is a serving of idols), hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.— EPH. V. 3, 5.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The Christians of Ephesus to whom this Epistle was addressed, being recent converts and surrounded by the vices and corruptions of paganism, were exposed to great danger. Especially prevalent in that pagan world were

sins of licentiousness and avarice. St. Paul during his imprisonment in Rome, so far removed from the faithful of Ephesus, felt the gravity of the perils by which they were beset, and so was moved by the Holy Spirit to direct this letter to them. He warns them, and through them all Christians, not only to fly the external commission of those capital vices of paganism, but not even to desire or unnecessarily speak of them.

I. Sins of thought and desire in general. 1. God has not only forbidden the external sins of adultery and theft, but He has added two special Commandments which prohibit even the desire of these sins. 2. The reasons why God added the ninth and tenth Commandments to the sixth and seventh are: (a) to show that, unlike human legislators, He extends His laws even to interior acts; (b) because evil desires and thoughts are the source and root of all bad actions; (c) to show against the teaching of the Pharisees that even internal acts could be the cause of eternal loss. 3. The ninth and tenth Commandments forbid evil thoughts and desires of all kinds, but lust and avarice are mentioned specifically because they are more common and more easily committed. 4. The real malice of internal sins is greater than that of external sins, because it is the internal act that commands the external commission of sin. Moreover, internal sins are more dangerous to the sinner, because more easily committed, and because it is more difficult to understand their enormity.

II. Internal sins of impurity. 1. The ninth Commandment forbids not only desires but also thoughts, and has reference not only to adultery, but also to all other forms of impurity. 2. The internal sins differ in kind according to the different external sins to which they are directed. These circumstances must be explained in confession. 3. Impure thoughts and desires are always mortal sins, if they are deliberate and are consented to. It is no fault, however, to be tempted to such sins, unless one be the cause of the temptation, or neglects to

resist it; neither does it matter how long the temptation lasts, or how frequently it is renewed, so long as the will rejects it.

III. Internal sins of covetousness. 1. The tenth Commandment does not forbid us to desire lawfully to obtain another's goods, nor to long for the same prosperity that another enjoys, provided we do not wish him any harm. 2. The violation of this Commandment consists in desiring unjustly what belongs to another, which may be, (a) by dwelling with pleasure on the thoughts of theft, etc.; (b) by being willing to take another's property, if this could be done; (c) by anxiously looking forward to the death of relatives or others from whom an inheritance or legacy is expected; (d) by wishing the misfortune of others in order therefrom to derive some temporal profit; (e) by desiring to use unlawful means to get rich quickly, etc.

Conclusion. 1. The best way to overcome impure thoughts and desires is, (a) to forestall temptations by avoiding dangerous occasions as far as possible; (b) by resisting temptations in the beginning; (c) by diverting the mind to other objects, and especially by raising it to God and holy things. 2. In order to avoid covetousness we should remember, (a) that our purpose in life is not to amass worldly possessions; (b) that nothing is more insecure than temporal goods, and that soon at longest we must leave them all.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; neither shalt thou desire his wife, nor his servant, nor his hand-maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his.

IMPORTANCE OF THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS

It is to be observed, in the first place, that these two precepts, which were delivered last in order, furnish a general

[1] Exod. xx. 17.

principle for the observance of all the rest. What is commanded in these two amounts to this, that if we wish to observe the preceding precepts of the Law, we must be particularly careful not to covet. For he who does not covet, being content with what he has, will not desire what belongs to others, but will rejoice in their prosperity, will give glory to the immortal God, will render Him boundless thanks, and will observe the Sabbath, that is, will enjoy perpetual repose and will respect his superiors. In fine, he will injure no man in word or deed or otherwise, for the root of all evil is concupiscence, which hurries its unhappy victims into every species of crime and wickedness.[2] Keeping these considerations in mind, the pastor will be more diligent in explaining this Commandment, and the faithful more ready to hear his instruction.

WHY THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS ARE EXPLAINED HERE TOGETHER

We have united these two Commandments because, since their subject-matter is similar, they may be treated together. However, the pastor may explain them either together or separately, accordingly as he may deem it more effective for his exhortations and admonitions. If, however, he has undertaken the exposition of the Decalogue, he will point out in what these two Commandments are dissimilar; how one covetousness differs from another—a difference noticed by St. Augustine, in his book of Questions on Exodus.[3] The one covetousness looks only to utility and interest, the other to unlawful desire and criminal pleasure. He, for instance, who covets a field or house, pursues profit rather than pleasure, while he who covets another man's wife yields to a desire of pleasure, not of profit.

NECESSITY OF PROMULGATING THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS

The promulgation of these two Commandments was necessary for two reasons: first, to explain the sixth and seventh Commandments. Reason alone shows that to prohibit adul-

[2] Aug., lib. 1. Retract. c. 15; epist. 200; lib. 9. de civitate Dei, cc. 4, 5.
[3] Quæst. 77. in Exod.; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae. q. 122. a. 6. ad 3. et 4.

tery is also to prohibit the desire of another man's wife, because, were the desire lawful, its indulgence must be so too; nevertheless, many of the Jews, blinded by sin, could not be induced to believe that such desires were prohibited by God. Nay, even after the Law had been promulgated and become known, many who professed themselves its interpreters, continued in the same error, as we learn from these words of our Lord recorded in St. Matthew: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: 'thou shalt not commit adultery'; but I say to you," etc.[4]

The second reason for the promulgation of these two Commandments is that they distinctly and in express terms prohibit some things of which the sixth and seventh Commandments contain but an implied prohibition. The seventh Commandment, for instance, forbids an unjust desire or endeavor to take what belongs to another; but this Commandment further prohibits even to covet it in any way, even though it could be acquired justly and lawfully, if we foresee that by such acquisition our neighbor would suffer some loss.

WHAT INSTRUCTION WE MAY DERIVE FROM THESE COMMANDMENTS

But before we come to the exposition of the Commandments, the faithful are first to be informed that by this law we are taught not only to restrain our inordinate desires, but also to know the boundless love of God towards us.

By the preceding Commandments God had, as it were, fenced us round with safeguards, securing us and ours against injury of every sort; but by the addition of these two Commandments, He intended chiefly to provide against the injuries which we might inflict on ourselves by the indulgence of inordinate desires, as would easily happen were we at liberty to covet all things indiscriminately. By this law then, which forbids to covet, God has blunted in some degree the keenness of desire, which excites to every kind of evil, so that by reason of His command these desires are to some extent diminished, and we ourselves, freed from the annoying importunity of the

[4] Matt. v. 28.

passions, are enabled to devote more time to the performance of the numerous and important duties of piety and religion which we owe to God.

Nor is this the only lesson of instruction which we derive from these Commandments. They also teach us that the divine law is to be observed not only by the external performance of duties, but also by the internal concurrence of the heart. Between divine and human laws, then, there is this difference, that human laws are fulfilled by an external compliance alone, whereas the laws of God, since He reads the heart, require purity of heart, sincere and undefiled integrity of soul.

The law of God, therefore, is a sort of mirror, in which we behold the corruption of our own nature; and hence these words of the Apostle: "I had not known concupiscence, if the law did not say: 'thou shalt not covet.'" [5] Concupiscence, which is the fuel of sin, and which originated in sin, is always inherent in our fallen nature; from it we know that we are born in sin, and, therefore, do we humbly fly for assistance to Him, who alone can efface the stains of sin.

MEANING OF CONCUPISCENCE

In common with the other Commandments, however, these two are partly mandatory, partly prohibitory. Both these parts should be distinctly explained by the pastor, in order that they may be perfectly understood by the faithful.

With regard to the prohibitory part, the pastor should explain what sort of concupiscence is prohibited by this law, lest some may think that which is not sinful to be sinful, such as the concupiscence mentioned by the Apostle when he says: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," [6] or that which David so earnestly desired when he said: "My soul hath coveted to long for thy justifications at all times." [7]

WHAT SORT OF CONCUPISCENCE IS NOT FORBIDDEN

Concupiscence, then, is a certain commotion and impulse of the soul, urging to the desire of pleasures which it does not

[5] Rom. vii. 7. [6] Gal. v. 17. [7] Ps. cxviii. 20.

actually enjoy. As the other propensities of the soul are not always sinful, neither is the impulse of concupiscence. It is not, for instance, sinful to desire food and drink; when cold, to wish for warmth; when warm, to wish to become cool. This species of concupiscence was originally implanted in us by the Author of nature; but in consequence of the sin of our first parents it passed the limits prescribed by nature and became so depraved that it frequently excites to the desire of those things which conflict with the spirit and are repugnant to reason.

However, if well regulated, and kept within proper bounds, it is often still the source of no slight advantage.

ADVANTAGES OF THE FIRST SORT OF CONCUPISCENCE

In the first place, it leads us to supplicate God continually, and humbly to beg of Him those things which we most earnestly desire. Prayer is the interpreter of our wishes; and if this lawful concupiscence did not exist within us, prayer would be far less frequent in the Church of God.

It also makes us esteem the gifts of God more highly; for the more eagerly we desire anything, the dearer and more pleasing will be its possession to us.

Finally, the gratification which we receive from the acquisition of the desired object increases our devotion and gratitude to God.

If then, it is sometimes lawful to covet, it must be conceded that not every species of concupiscence is forbidden. St. Paul, it is true, says that "concupiscence is sin";[8] but his words are to be understood in the same sense as those of Moses, whom he cites,[9] as the Apostle himself declares when, in his Epistle to the Galatians he calls it "the concupiscence of the flesh," for he says: "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."[10]

Hence that natural, well regulated concupiscence which does not go beyond its proper limits, is not prohibited; still less do these Commandments forbid that spiritual desire of the virtuous mind, which prompts us to long for those things that

[8] Rom. vii. 20. [9] Exodus xx. 17. [10] Gal. v. 16.

war against the flesh, for the Sacred Scriptures themselves exhort us to such a desire: "Covet ye my words," [11] "Come over to me all ye that desire me." [12]

WHAT SORT OF CONCUPISCENCE IS HERE PROHIBITED

It is not, then, the mere power of desire, which can move either to a good or a bad object that is prohibited by these Commandments; it is the indulgence of evil desire, which is called "the concupiscence of the flesh," and "the fuel of sin," and which when accompanied by the consent of the will, is always sinful. Therefore only that covetousness is forbidden which the Apostle calls "the concupiscence of the flesh," that is to say, those motions of corrupt desire which are contrary to the dictates of reason and outstep the limits prescribed by God.

THE MALICE OF CONCUPISCENCE

This kind of covetousness is condemned, either because it desires what is evil, such as adultery, drunkenness, murder, and such heinous crimes, of which the Apostle says: "Let us not covet evil things, as they also coveted"; [13] or because, although the objects may not be bad in themselves, yet there is some other reason which makes it wrong to desire them, as when, for instance, they are prohibited by God or His Church, for it is not permitted us to desire these things which it is altogether unlawful to possess. Such were, in the Old Law, the gold and silver from which idols were made, and which the Lord forbade anyone to covet.[14]

Another reason why this sort of vicious desire is condemned is that it has for its object that which belongs to another, such as a house, servant, field, wife, ox, ass, and many other things, all of which the law of God forbids us to covet simply because they belong to another. The desire of such things, when consented to, is criminal, and is numbered among the most grievous sins. For sin is committed the moment the soul, yielding to the impulse of corrupt desires, is pleased with, or

[11] Wisdom vi. 12.
[12] Eccl. xxiv. 26.
[13] 1 Cor. x. 6.
[14] Deut. vii. 25, 26.

does not resist, evil, as St. James, pointing out the beginning and progress of sin, teaches when he says: "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured; then, when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death." [15]

When, therefore, the law says: "Thou shalt not covet," it means that we are not to desire those things which belong to others. A thirst for what belongs to others is intense and insatiable; it is written: "A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money," [16] and of such a one Isaias says: "Woe to you that join house to house, and lay field to field." [17]

But a distinct explanation of each of the words, in which this Commandment is expressed, will place the deformity and grievousness of this sin in a clearer light.

THE VARIOUS OBJECTS WE ARE FORBIDDEN TO COVET

The pastor, therefore, will teach that by the word "house" is to be understood not only the habitation in which we dwell but all our property. In this sense the word is used in Scripture. Thus when it is said in Exodus that God built houses for the midwives [18] the meaning is that he improved their condition and means.

From this interpretation, therefore, we perceive, that we are forbidden to indulge an eager desire of riches, or to envy others their wealth, or power, or rank; but on the contrary we are directed to be content with our own condition, whether it be high or low. Furthermore it is forbidden to desire the glory of others since glory also is comprised under the word "house."

The words that follow, "nor his ox nor his ass," teach us that not only is it unlawful to desire things of greater value, such as a house, rank, glory, because they belong to others; but also things of little value, whatever they may be, animate or inanimate.

[15] James i. 14; St. Thomas, Ia. IIae, q. 4. art. 17, 8; August., lib. 12. de Trinit. c. 12; de serm. Dom. in monte c. 23; Greg. hom. 19. in Evang., lib. 4. Moral. c. 27; in respons. 11. ad interrog.; Aug. and Jerome on first chapter of Amos.

[16] Eccl. v. 9. [17] Isa. v. 8. [18] Exod. i. 21.

The words, "nor his servant," come next, and include captives as well as other slaves whom it is no more lawful to covet than the other property of our neighbor. With regard to the free who serve voluntarily either for wages, or out of affection or respect, it is unlawful, by words, or hopes, or promises, or rewards to bribe or solicit them, under any pretext whatever, to leave those to whose service they have freely engaged themselves; nay more, if, before the period of their contract has expired, they leave their employers, they are to be admonished, on the authority of this Commandment, to return by all means, until they shall have completed their full time of service.

The word "neighbor" is mentioned in this Commandment to mark the wickedness of those who covet the lands, houses and the like, which lie in their immediate vicinity; for neighborhood, which should make for friendship, is transformed by covetousness from a source of love into a cause of hatred.

But this Commandment is by no means transgressed by those who desire to purchase or have actually purchased, at a fair price, from a neighbor, the goods which he has for sale. Instead of doing him an injury, they, on the contrary, very much assist their neighbor, because to him the money is much more convenient and useful than the goods he sells.

The Commandment which forbids us to covet the goods of our neighbor, is followed by another, which forbids us to covet our neighbor's wife—a law that prohibits not only the adulterer's criminal desire of his neighbor's wife, but even the wish to marry her. For of old when a bill of divorce was permitted, it might easily happen, that she who was put away by one husband might be married to another. But the Lord forbade the desire of another's wife lest husbands might be induced to abandon their wives, or wives conduct themselves with such bad temper towards their husbands, as to make it necessary to send them away.

But, in the Gospel dispensation, this sin forbidden by this Commandment is more grievous because the wife, although separated from her husband, cannot marry another during his lifetime. He, therefore, who covets another man's wife will

easily fall into one or another criminal desire, for he will desire either the death of the husband or the commission of adultery.

The same principle holds good with regard to women who have been betrothed to another. To covet them in marriage is also unlawful; and whoever strives to break their engagement violates one of the most holy of promises.

And if to covet the wedded wife of another is entirely unlawful, it is no less so to desire in marriage the virgin who is consecrated to religion and to the service of God. But should anyone desire in marriage a married woman whom he thinks to be single, and whom he would not wish to marry if he knew she had a husband living, certainly he does not violate this Commandment. Pharaoh[19] and Abimelech,[20] as the Scripture informs us, were betrayed into this error; they wished to marry Sarah, supposing her to be unmarried, and to be the sister, not the wife of Abraham.

WHAT THIS COMMANDMENT REQUIRES: I. DETACHMENT AND LIBERALITY

In order to make known the remedies calculated to overcome the vice of covetousness, the pastor will explain the positive part of the Commandment, which consists in this, that "if riches abound, we set not our hearts upon them," [21] that we be prepared to sacrifice them for the sake of piety and religion, that we contribute cheerfully towards the relief of the poor, and that, if we ourselves are poor, we bear our poverty with patience and with a holy joy. And, indeed, liberality to the poor is a most effectual means of extinguishing in our own hearts the desire of what belongs to another.

Concerning the praises of poverty and the contempt of riches, the pastor will find little difficulty in collecting abundant matter for the instruction of the faithful from the Sacred Scriptures and the works of the Fathers.[22]

[19] Gen. xii. [20] Gen. xx. [21] Ps. lxi. 11.

[22] Jerome, ep. 1. ad Heliod.; 8 ad Demetriadem; 150 ad Hedebiam; quæst. 1 et 16 ad Pammach.; Basil., in the Longer Rules, interrog. 9; Chrys., in ep. ad Rom. on the words: "salutate Priscam"; Cassian., lib. de institut. Monach. cc. 13, 33; Collat. 23. c. 26; Greg., hom. 18 in Ezech.; Amb. in c. 6. Luc.; Leo the Gr., in serm. de omnibus Sanctis.; Aug., lib. 17. de civ. Dei; epist. 98. ad Hilar.; epist. 109.

2. DESIRE OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S WILL

Likewise this Commandment requires us to desire, with all the ardor and all the earnestness of our souls, the consummation, not of our own wishes, but of the holy will of God, as it is expressed in the Lord's Prayer. Now it is His will that we be made eminent in holiness; that we preserve our souls pure and undefiled; that we practice those spiritual duties which are opposed to sensuality; that we subdue our unruly appetites, and enter, under the guidance of reason and of the spirit, upon a virtuous course of life; and finally that we hold under restraint those senses in particular which supply matter to the passions.

THE EVILS OF CONCUPISCENCE

In order to extinguish the fire of passion, it will be found most efficacious to place before our eyes the evil consequences of its indulgence.

Among those evils the first is that by obedience to the impulse of passion, sin gains uncontrolled sway over the soul; hence the Apostle warns us: "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof." [23] Just as resistance to the passions destroys the power of sin, so indulgence of the passions expels God from His throne, and introduces sin in His place.

Again, concupiscence, as St. James teaches,[24] is the source from which flows every sin. Likewise St John says: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." [25]

A third evil of sensuality is that it darkens the understanding. Blinded by passion the sinner comes to regard whatever he desires as lawful and even laudable.

Finally, concupiscence stifles the seed of the divine word, sown in our souls by God, the great husbandman. "Some," says St. Mark, "are sown among thorns; these are they who hear the word, and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness

[23] Rom. vi. 12. [24] James iii. 14. [25] 1 John ii. 16.

of riches, and the lust after other things, entering in, choke the word, and it is made fruitless." [26]

WHO ARE MOST ENSLAVED TO CUPIDITY

They who, more than others, are the slaves of concupiscence, the pastor will exhort with greater earnestness. Such are the following: Those who are addicted to improper amusements, or who are immoderately given to recreation; merchants, who wish for scarcity and who cannot bear that others, by engaging in business, hinder them from selling at a higher or buying at a lower rate; those who wish to see their neighbor reduced to want in order that they themselves may profit in buying or selling; soldiers who thirst for war, in order to enrich themselves with plunder; physicians, who wish for the spread of disease; lawyers, who are anxious for a number of cases and litigations; and artisans who, through greed for gain and with a view to increase their own profits, wish for a scarcity of the necessaries of life in order that they may increase their profits. All these are offenders against this Commandment.

They too, sin gravely against this Commandment, who, because they are envious of the praise and glory won by the achievements of others, strive to tarnish in some degree their fame, particularly if they themselves are idle and worthless characters; for fame and glory are the reward of virtue and industry, not of indolence and laziness.

Sermon

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

BY THE REV. J. V. SCHUBERT

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; neither shalt thou desire his wife, nor his servant, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his (Ex. xx. 17).

What do the last two Commandments teach us?

They teach us not to covet or desire, that is, to insist upon having anything that belongs to our neighbor. We must not

[26] Mark iv. 18, 19.

covet his property, nor his office, nor his rank, nor his good name, nor his happiness, nor his achievements; we must not begrudge him any of these things.

I. CONCUPISCENCE OR EVIL DESIRES

Evil desires lie at the root of all sin.

When the devil was still an angel of light, he said to himself: "I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, . . . I will be like the Most High" (Is. xiv. 13, 14). He desired to be equal with God. His evil passions made him arrogant and so he broke the greatest of all the commandments, and did not acknowledge God to be his Master.

The serpent in Paradise asked *Eve* why she did not eat the forbidden fruit, and told her that, as soon as they ate thereof, they would be as gods, knowing good and evil. These words made Eve think about the fruit, and desire to taste it. At length she yielded to the temptation and ate it, thus plunging herself and the whole human race into misery. Her evil desires made her disobey God.

Achab coveted Naboth's vineyard, and when Naboth refused to sell it, Jezabel found false witnesses, who swore what was untrue about him, and he broke the Second Commandment. Thus Achab and Jezabel sinned grievously in consequence of yielding to covetousness and evil desires.

Many people work hard on Sunday, in order to make money. Their desire for wealth makes them break the Third Commandment.

Core, Dathan and *Abiron* were jealous because God chose Moses to be the leader and Aaron to be the high priest of His people. They coveted these high positions for themselves, and their evil desires made them rebel against God's representatives on earth, and thus they broke the Fourth Commandment.

Absalom coveted his father's throne, and consequently he rebelled against David, and persecuted him.

Cain was jealous, because God preferred Abel. He did not control his angry passion, and so it led to his killing his brother, and breaking the Fifth Commandment.

The *Pharisees* were jealous of our Lord, because He could

work miracles, and because many people followed Him. Their jealousy made them plot His death.

Herod coveted his brother's wife, and, yielding to his wicked desire, took Herodias to live with him. St. John rebuked him, but he would not listen, and cast John into prison, and finally cut off his head. To so great a crime did his evil desires give rise.

Judas wanted money, and his love of it made him first cheat, then be a traitor, and finally commit suicide.

You see how evil desires cause men to break every one of the Commandments. God wished to remove the root of all wickedness from our hearts, and so He ordered us to desire nothing evil. A man who has banished all such desires from his heart is not likely to sin.

Evil desires lead to misery, even if at first sight it seems as if to possess our neighbor's goods would be to our advantage.

Lot wanted the richest pastures, and deprived Abraham of the best parts of the land, but he did not prosper; robbers attacked him and carried off his property, and he had to take flight when Sodom was destroyed. He suffered many troubles through trying to get the best pastures, whilst Abraham, who was less grasping, fared better.

Jacob coveted his brother's birthright and his father's blessing, and in order to obtain them he cheated Isaac and Esau, but his sin was punished. He had to flee in solitude and poverty; Laban cheated him of his wages, his own sons deceived him and he had many sorrows.

Giezi coveted Naaman's wealth, but his riches only brought upon him the fearful disease known as leprosy.

Absalom coveted the royal crown, and perished miserably.

Pharao wanted the Israelites to work for very low wages, and his greed caused his death in the Red Sea.

Evil desires are like a will-o'-the-wisp, luring men to destruction, and God warns us against them by saying: "Thou shalt not covet." They spring up in our hearts like weeds, and beset us from childhood onwards, but they do not proceed from God, since He is good, and nothing bad comes from Him. They were planted by the devil in the heart of Adam and Eve on the day of their fall into sin, and we have inherited con-

cupiscence from them. It is like a disease, and Satan is always trying to make it grow and flourish in our hearts. Ought we to look on and do nothing to stop him? In Paradise God said that He would put enmity between men and the serpent. The devil is our enemy, and because God hates him, we too must hate him, and refuse to obey when he wants us to do wrong. To us, as to Cain, God says: "The lust (to sin) shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it." The devil often tries to put wicked thoughts and desires into our minds, as he did into Eve's. Beware! If he says at night: "You are very tired; do not say your prayers," tell him that you mean to say an Our Father more than usual, to pay him out. If, when you are in trouble, he suggests that all your prayers have been in vain, and that God does not listen to your requests, answer: "You would be pleased if I were to murmur against God, like the Israelites in the desert; but you are tempting me in vain. I will be as steadfast as Joseph and Job; I will do nothing to please you."

Some Sunday morning he may whisper: "Why should you go to Mass? Stay at home, and have a good sleep." Get up at once, and tell him that he has made you do so. If your parents give you some work to do, he often suggests that they are hard upon you, and that you had better say: "I won't do it." Then you must remind him that God's representatives have more right to your obedience than he has, and you are not his slave.

Perhaps he has before now put it into your mind to take a stick and strike someone. If he does this again, tell him that you are not, like Cain, his obedient servant.

Sometimes he comes with a whole bevy of impure spirits who force their way into your heart, and try to take possession of it, and befoul it with nasty thoughts. Show them who is master, and drive all the dirty rabble out of your mind, as Jesus drove out those who defiled the Temple.

There must always be enmity between God's children and the devil, and we are bound to stifle the evil thoughts and desires that he puts into our minds. Only a coward gives way to them; it is our duty to resist the devil's suggestions. It may not be easy to get rid

of him, for he is cunning, and, when one plan fails, he tries another, but that should not trouble us. In a battle the bravest soldiers meet with most opposition, and we can overcome the devil on earth, just as the good angels overcame him in heaven. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Fight bravely under our Lord's banner, and some day He will say to you: "Well done, you have fought the good fight, receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him."

2. LAWFUL DESIRES

Is it never right to desire anything for ourselves?

The *Israelites* in the desert desired bread, water and meat, and God supplied them. *Job* asked to be cured of his disease, and his prayer was granted. The *lepers* besought our Lord to heal them, and He did what they asked. *Zachary* and *Elizabeth* prayed for a son, and they became the parents of John the Baptist. *Our Lady* wished the guests at the marriage feast in Cana to have wine, and her request was granted. Can you think of any more similar instances?

It is right to ask God for anything that we really need, and that it would be good for us to have. The only things that we must not ask for are those that would be an occasion of sin.

It was quite right for Jacob to wish for riches, but wrong for him to desire Esau's birthright, as he could not have that without depriving Esau of it, and doing him harm. It was right for Lot to want rich pastures, but wrong to claim the best parts of the country, as thus he inflicted loss upon Abraham.

There was no harm in Achab's wanting the vineyard, if Naboth had consented to sell it; but it was wrong for the king to cause Naboth's murder.

There was no harm in Judas' wishing for money, but it was very wicked of him to steal it and to betray his Master, as in this way he injured our Lord.

Desires are not lawful if they cannot be gratified without causing pain and loss to others.

A glazier might lawfully pray for work; but he must not pray for a hailstorm to break all the windows in the neighborhood, because in that case he would earn money at the injury

of others, and God says: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." You might lawfully wish to have as good a servant as someone else has, but you must not try to entice that servant into your employment, for "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's servant." A doctor might wish and pray for a good practice, but he must never wish for a terrible epidemic to give him more patients. A lawyer must not desire that people will quarrel and go to law, for: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods."

We never ought to want anything that we cannot have without unlawfully depriving someone else of it.

3. THE THINGS THAT A GOOD CHRISTIAN MAY DESIRE

What is the chief thing that we ought to ask of God?

Our Saviour tells us that we may ask much and frequently. He teaches us this lesson in the beautiful parable of the man who came in the night to ask his friend for some loaves. (Luke xi. 5-13). In this parable He says: "Ask and you shall receive," and in another place He promises: "If you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it you" (John xvi. 23).

What kind of prayer is most pleasing to God?

When Solomon came to the throne, the Lord appeared to him in a dream by night, saying: "Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee." And Solomon said: "Thou hast made Thy servant king . . . and I am but a child . . . Give me therefore an understanding heart, to judge Thy people, and discern between good and evil." This request was pleasing to the Lord, who said to Solomon: "Because thou hast asked this thing and hast not asked for thyself long life or riches . . . but hast asked for thyself wisdom to discern judgment, behold, I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart. . . . I have given thee also riches and glory, and if thou wilt walk in my ways, and keep my commandments, I will lengthen thy days" (3 Kings iii. 5–14).

This story teaches us what the chief thing is that we should ask of God. What do most people desire? What would you ask for, if God appeared to you in a dream?

The chief things for which we ought to pray are things that will do good to our souls, viz., truth and wisdom, and also God's honor and glory. If we ask for these, He will give us earthly riches and prosperity, as He gave them to Solomon. Our Saviour tells us: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all other things will be given you in addition." We ought to think first of our souls, and of what we need to enable us to keep the commandments; God will supply us with everything else that we really require. There are many instances of this in Holy Scripture.

Joseph was careful to obey all God's commandments, and he enjoyed great honor and power in Egypt.

Abraham kept God's law, and became the ancestor of the chosen people, who were to inherit the Promised Land.

Jacob arrived at Laban's house a poor man, but he acted according to God's will, and acquired great wealth.

David obeyed God, and killed Goliath. He became king and was our Saviour's ancestor.

Think also of Ruth, Job and Tobias.

It is true therefore that, when people have sought first the kingdom of God and His justice, all other things have been added unto them. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." What have you sought and desired hitherto? What ought you to have desired? Have you always received the things for which you have prayed? No; I will tell you why God did not grant your prayers. Our Saviour says: "Seek God's justice." If we do not keep the commandments, we are not seeking God's justice, and so the other things that we should like to have are not given us. If God is to hear your prayers, keep the commandments, and seek God's kingdom, *i.e.*, heaven. Then everything else, that is good for you, will be given you in addition.

4. OUR SAVIOUR'S EXAMPLE; WHAT HE DESIRED

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods."

If we obey the letter of this commandment, have we done all that is required of us? No, we are still far from behaving as true disciples of Christ should behave; He taught us by His

example how we ought to interpret this commandment. He was poor, yet He never cared for wealth, nor wanted the possession of others. He was content to remain poor, and to say: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." He died stripped of everything, even of His clothing. But, poor as He was, He never desired anything for Himself; His one thought was to help others. How easily He could have made Himself rich! But we nowhere read that He asked for money; He went about helping others. At the marriage in Cana He came to the assistance of the hosts, and furnished them with wine. At Naim He consoled the sorrowful widow, and gave her back her son. He took pity upon lepers and restored them to health. When He Himself was hungry after His long fast, He worked no miracle, but when the multitude in the desert was in need of food, He satisfied thousands with a few barley loaves. Innumerable sick people came to Him, and went home cured. He was always most ready to help the very poorest, whom every one despised. The Pharisees looked down upon the penitent woman, but our Saviour welcomed her when she sought forgiveness; He took pity upon the man who had suffered for thirty-eight years, and He did not refuse mercy to the thief upon the cross.

He was always the Good Samaritan, helping by preference those who were most poor and miserable. He wished nothing but good even to His enemies, and showed them much kindness. Think how He cured the servant Malchus, whose ear had been cut off. He loved the poor more than His own life, and He died on the Cross in order to redeem sinners. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). He laid down His life for enemies as well as friends. He sought not His own welfare, but the salvation of both friends and enemies; He desired nothing for Himself but the eternal happiness of all mankind. *Nothing for self; everything for others*—Christ's very enemies acknowledged that this had been His rule in life, for they said, as He hung on the Cross: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

You see how our Divine Saviour interpreted the last commandment and changed its meaning. It was no longer: "Thou shalt

not covet thy neighbor's goods," but: "Thou shalt desire what is for thy neighbor's good." Do whatever men ask of you, provided it is right and expedient. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you also to them" (Matt. vii. 12). "Let no man seek his own, but that which is another's" (1 Cor. x. 24). "In humility let each esteem others better than himself, not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's (Phil. ii. 3, 4). Our Saviour wishes us to love one another, and so in His farewell discourse He says: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John xiii. 34, 35).

References

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

SUBJECT

THE OBLIGATION OF RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

TEXT

Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down.—JOHN vi. 11.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, recorded in to-day's Gospel, just preceded the promise of our Lord to give to the world, under the species of bread and wine, His own body and blood. In fact, the former was a type of, and preparation for the latter. By suddenly multiplying five barley

loaves and two fishes so as to feed five thousand men, the Saviour intended to dispose the minds of the Jews to accept the still greater wonder of giving them His own flesh and blood as food and drink, which He announced at Capharnaum on the following day.

As Easter is now near at hand, and as the law of the Church obliges us to receive Holy Communion during the Easter season, it is useful for us to reflect at this time upon our obligation of fulfilling our Easter duty.

I. What the Church commands regarding Holy Communion. 1. Under the Old Law the Jews were obliged to eat the Paschal lamb under pain of death. But the Paschal lamb was only a type of Christ, the Lamb of God. How much more important, then, it is to receive our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist at Paschal time! 2. This our Saviour not only desires, but has commanded. At the Last Supper He said: "Do this in commemoration of me," and previously He had admonished: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you." 3. The Church, in order to impress upon our minds this command of Christ, and to fix the time for its fulfillment, obliges all to go to Communion at least once a year, and this during the Easter season. This law of the Church was enacted by the Lateran Council in the year 1215, and was renewed by the Council of Trent. 4. The Easter Communion obliges: (a) under grave sin; (b) all those who have reached the age of reason, *i.e.*, who can distinguish between good and evil, and between the Eucharistic and ordinary bread; (c) during the period from Palm Sunday to Low Sunday, unless extended by the Bishop; (d) to a worthy reception of Communion. 5. Those who allow the Easter season to pass are still obliged to fulfil their obligation.

II. What the Church recommends regarding Holy Communion. 1. It was our Lord's wish that the faithful should receive Communion daily, as we gather from His comparison of the Eucharist to the manna which was the daily sustenance of the Israelites in the desert, and from the words of the Our Father,

"give us this day our daily bread." 2. The early Christians received Communion daily, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles (ii. 42), and from early ecclesiastical writers. 3. The Council of Trent (Sess. xxii: ch. vi) expressed the desire that the faithful, as often as present at Mass, should receive Holy Communion. 4. The Church has never ceased to recommend frequent, and even daily communion; and in our own days Pope Pius X has renewed the ancient practice, declaring that the only conditions necessary for daily Communion are the state of grace and a right intention (see Outline for Second Sunday after Pentecost in this Series).

EXHORTATION. 1. The time for the Easter duty is at hand; do not fail to fulfil it. 2. Parents, guardians, and others in authority, as far as they can, should see that their children and dependents faithfully discharge this obligation. 3. The faithful should be taught that receiving Holy Communion at Easter time is the minimum required of them, and should be encouraged to approach the holy table as often as possible.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

ALL ARE BOUND TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR

Lest any be kept away from communion by the fear that the requisite preparation is too hard and laborious, the faithful are frequently to be reminded that they are all bound to receive this Sacrament. Furthermore, the Church has decreed that whoever neglects to approach Holy Communion once a year, at Easter, is liable to sentence of excommunication.[1]

THE FAITHFUL SHOULD BE EXHORTED TO THE PRACTICE OF FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION

However, let not the faithful imagine that it is enough to receive the body of the Lord once a year only, in obedience to the decree of the Church. They should approach oftener; but whether

[1] Lateran Council, c. 28; lib. 5. Decret. tit. de Pœnit. et remiss. cap. omnis utriusque sexus; C. of Trent, sess. 13, 9.

monthly, weekly, or daily, cannot be decided by any fixed universal rule. St. Augustine, however, lays down a most certain rule applicable to all: "Live in such a manner as to be able to receive every day." [2] It will therefore be the duty of the pastor frequently to admonish the faithful that as they deem it necessary to afford daily nutriment to the body, they should also feel solicitous to feed and nourish the soul every day with this heavenly food. It is clear that the soul stands not less in need of spiritual, than the body of corporal food. Here it will be found most useful to recall the inestimable advantages which, as we have already shown, flow from sacramental Communion. It will be well also to refer to the manna which was a figure of this Sacrament, and of which the Israelites had occasion to partake every day.[3] The Fathers who earnestly recommended the frequent reception of this Sacrament, may also be cited. The words of St. Augustine, "thou sinnest daily, receive daily," express not his opinion only, but that of all the Fathers who have written on the subject, as any one may easily discover from their writings.[4]

DAILY COMMUNION WAS THE PRACTICE OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH

That there was a time when the faithful approached Holy Communion every day we learn from the Acts of the Apostles. All who then professed the faith of Christ, burned with such true and ardent charity that, devoting themselves to prayer and other works of piety,[5] they were found prepared to communicate daily. This devout practice, which seems to have been interrupted for a time, was again partially revived by the holy Pope and martyr Anacletus, who commanded that all the ministers who assisted at the holy sacrifice should communicate—an ordinance, as the

[2] De verbis Domini, ser. 28.

[3] Exod. xvi. 21, 22.

[4] Frequent communion is recommended by the following: Augustine, de verbis Domini serm. 28. (this sermon belongs not to Aug. but to Ambr., lib. 5. de sacram c. 4.); Aug., Epist. 118. c. 3; Ignat., ad Ephes., well before the end; Basil., Epist. ad Cæsar. patr.; Ambr., lib. 3. de sacr. c. 4; Chrysost., hom. 61. ad pop. Antioch.; Cypr., de Orat. Dominica on the words "panem nostrum quotidianum"; Jerome, Epist. 28, ad Lucin. towards the end; Cyril., c. 3. in Joan. c. 37; de consecr. dist. 2. in many chapters on this subject.

[5] Acts ii. 42. 46.

Pontiff declares, of Apostolic institution.[6] It was also for a long time the practice of the Church that, as soon as the sacrifice was complete, and when the priest himself had communicated, he turned to the congregation and invited the faithful to the holy table in these words: "Come, brethren, and receive Communion;" and thereupon those who were prepared, advanced to receive the holy mysteries with the most fervent devotion.[7]

But subsequently, when charity and devotion had grown so cold among Christians that the faithful very seldom approached Holy Communion, it was decreed by Pope Fabian, that all should communicate thrice every year, at Christmas, at Easter, and at Pentecost. This decree was afterwards confirmed by many Councils, particularly by the first of Agdé.[8]

Such at length was the decay of piety that not only was this holy and salutary law unobserved, but Communion was deferred for years. The Council of Lateran, therefore, decreed that all the faithful should communicate, at least, once a year, at Easter, and that neglect of this duty should be chastised by exclusion from the society of the faithful.[9]

CHILDREN SHOULD NOT RECEIVE COMMUNION BEFORE THE USE OF REASON

But although this law, sanctioned by the authority of God and of His Church, concerns all the faithful, the pastor will teach that it does not extend to those who on account of their tender age have not attained the use of reason. For these are not able to distinguish the Holy Eucharist from common food, and cannot bring with them to this Sacrament the piety and devotion which it demands. Furthermore, to extend the precept to them would appear inconsistent with the ordinance of our Lord, for He said: "Take and eat"[10]—words which cannot apply to infants, who

[6] De consec. dist. 2, c. 10.

[7] On daily communion see Dionys., de Eccles. Hierarch. c. 3, parte 2; Jerome, Epist. 28, ad Lucin.; Greg., lib. 2, dialog. c. 23; lib. de Eccl. dogmat. c. 53, quoted in de consec. dist. 2, c. 13.

[8] The decree of Pope Fabian is found in de cons. dist. 2. c. 16; there also is quoted C. of Agdé, c. 18. c. sæculares.

[9] Quoted in lib. 5. decr. tit. de pæn. et remiss. c. omnes utriusque sexus.

[10] Matt. xxvi. 26.

are evidently incapable of taking and eating. In some places, it is true, an ancient practice prevailed of giving the Holy Eucharist even to infants;[11] but, for the reasons already assigned, and for other reasons in keeping with Christian piety, this practice has been long discontinued by authority of the same Church.

With regard to the age at which children should be admitted to Communion, this the parents and confessor can best determine. To them it belongs to ascertain whether the children have acquired a competent knowledge of this admirable Sacrament, and whether they desire to receive it.

WHEN COMMUNION MAY BE GIVEN TO THE INSANE

Communion must not be given to persons who are insane and incapable of devotion. However, according to the decree of the Council of Carthage, it may be administered to them at the close of life, provided they had shown, before losing their minds, a pious and religious disposition, and if no danger arising from the state of the stomach or other inconvenience or disrespect is likely.[12]

Sermon

Easter Duty

BY THE REV. J. A. M. GILLIS, A.M.

"Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you."—John vi. 54.

INTRODUCTION

Imposing in its majestic grandeur the holy Temple of Jerusalem stood for centuries on the summit of Mount Moria. It was not the gorgeous edifice erected by the gifted son of David. Less magnificent in appearance it was also less favored than the Temple of Solomon as the repository of those sacred objects which told the story of Jehovah's merciful dealings with His people.

Lavishly furnished from an almost inexhaustible royal treasury;

[11] Cypr., de Lapsis, after the middle.
[12] C. of Carth. 4, 76.

with the richest gifts of the gold of Ophir; with the purest marble from the mines of Paros; with the rarest silver and priceless stones, and most costly woods, brought by the fleets of Israel and Tyre from the farthest lands, that first Temple of God was specially blessed. There, in its inmost sanctuary, reposed the sacred Ark with its precious contents; the tables of the law, written in the handwriting of God, and given amidst the thunder and smoke of Sinai; the miraculous rod, the symbol of the sacred priesthood and the coveted title of the high priesthood of Aaron; and the vessel of manna, the cherished memorial of God's merciful dealings with Israel—her deliverance from the land of bondage. These, together with the sacred fire, fanned by the breezes of the holy mountain; the oil of unction prepared by Moses; and the cloud of smoke which attested the presence of the divine Majesty —all passed away with the ancient Temple. But, with the absence of those sacred memorials, there was a blessing in store for the new Temple of Jerusalem which made it superior to the magnificent Temple of Solomon; for in it the predictions of Aggeus, the prophet, were to be fulfilled. The Messias Himself, the long expected of nations, was to appear there in person: "Who is left among you that saw this house in its first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in comparison to that as nothing in your eyes? . . . Yet now take courage . . . saith the Lord of hosts . . . and I will move all nations. *And the desired of all nations shall come;* and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts . . . Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts" (Aggeus ii. 4-10).

It was forty days after the wonderful things which happened on the first beautiful Christmas night, when in fulfilment of the Levitical precept, which required the purification of mothers and ransom of the first born, the Blessed Virgin appeared within the sacred enclosure of the Temple with the divine child in her arms. Then was presented in the Temple its Lord and King, who sits on the arc of heaven. And the holy Simeon, divinely inspired, took the King-Messias, and gazing with prophetic vision through the screen which conceals the future from the gaze of man, pronounced his solemn prediction: Behold, this child is set for the

fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted (Luke ii. 34).

Let us pause for a moment and reflect on the prophetic words of this holy man. Let us try to bring home to us their significance. Christ came for the redemption and salvation of all men. He did not come from the bosom of His Eternal Father to be the occasion of the fall or ruin of a single soul. In His all-embracing love He wills that all should be saved, and His sacrifice on Calvary, making full and complete satisfaction to His Eternal Father for all sin, was offered for all. Hence, the ruin that will come to many on account of him, as prophesied by the holy Simeon, will be brought on them through their wilful blindness and obstinacy in refusing to comply with the means He has left them to save their souls; and by not accepting His grace taking occasion to their fall and ruin.

NEGLECT OF HOLY COMMUNION

In no loving institution of God is this more manifest than in the sacred institution by which He gives us Himself to be the food and life of our souls under the sacramental veils in Holy Communion. In the clearest and most unequivocal words He assures us that we must receive His Flesh and Blood to be the food and life of our souls. Yet many there are, even among believing Catholics, who act as if this loving institution of our Lord were nothing but a myth.

More from habit than with a view to its necessity they will appear at the holy table once or twice a year; and they will hold fast by the idea that they have thus complied with the necessary means to preserve their souls in grace. Is the soul, daily and hourly engaged in mortal combat with the powers of darkness, able of its own natural strength to cope with such mighty enemies? Does not the great St. Paul assure us that of ourselves we can do nothing against the formidable and ever aggressive forces of Satan? Does he not remind us that all our strength comes from above: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13). Hence, Jesus Christ instituted the Sacraments to be a means of grace, and to give the grace which they signify. Their outward form indicates their effect upon the soul.

Baptism, by its outward washing in natural water, inwardly cleanses the soul from the darkening, defiling stain of sin. Confirmation, by its outward anointing, as of warriors preparing for battle, produces in the soul virility and strength, which makes the recipient a soldier of Christ—a confessor of His holy faith. And so all the Sacraments have been instituted by Jesus Christ to produce in the soul the particular grace of which their outward signs are symbolic.

Hence, the blessed Eucharist, being instituted under the form of corporal food, is the nourishment of the soul, to strengthen it in its warfare against the powers of darkness, as natural food nourishes the body and gives it physical energy to perform the work which is natural to it. This Christ Himself gives us clearly to understand in the sixth chapter of St. John: "I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. . . . Amen, amen, I say unto you. Except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day" (John vi. 48-55). But it is of the nature of bread to be received frequently and constantly in order to supply the body with that strength which is natural to it, in his physical exertions. In that it differs from medicine which is used only seldom, as a remedy against sickness. Hence, the blessed Eucharist, instituted under the appearance of corporal food, was intended by our blessed Lord to be received frequently.

PRACTICE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

And such was the practice of the primitive Church, the people receiving daily the bread of heaven, as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles: "And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts ii. 46). This pious custom continued during those early ages which gave saints

and martyrs without number to the kingdom of God. In those early centuries, when the heavenly virtue of charity filled the hearts of the faithful, it was the beautiful and pious custom for all who assisted at Mass to receive Holy Communion; and the divine gift was even sent to those who could not be present at the holy sacrifice. While in time of persecution, when special spiritual strength was needed to support the holy martyrs in their trials and sufferings, the faithful enjoyed the blessed privilege of keeping in their possession the sacred species to communicate themselves in time of need. But unfortunately abuses began to appear, as St. Paul tells us. Like the net of the parable the Church began to grow and to take in within her spreading folds all manner of fishes—the good and the bad. And when its members, no longer held captives in those gloomy prisons where the cruel fangs of the wild beasts, or the keen sword of the gladiator awaited them, began to build for themselves great palaces and mighty cities, then religion grew cold in their hearts.

Fraternal love, so beautifully exemplified among the early Christians, began to disappear, and the faithful less frequently approached the holy table. Even at an early date in the primitive ages the Church exhorted her children by worthy preparation to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord; and she loudly denounced such unseemly conduct as rendered them unworthy to appear at the divine banquet, and thus nullified the beautiful effects of the Sacrament on the soul. St. Paul's severe condemnation of the conduct of the people of the voluptuous city of Corinth in not having due regard to the holy mysteries is worthy of note: "When you come therefore together into one place it is not now to eat the Lord's supper. For every one taketh before his own supper to eat, and one indeed is hungry, and another is drunk. What, have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God; and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? Do I praise you? In this I praise you not, for I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat; this is my body which shall be delivered for you; this do for a commemoration of me. In like manner also the

chalice after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood; this do ye as often as you shall drink for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until he come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself not discerning the body of the Lord. Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 20-30).

THE EASTER PRECEPT

As the centuries rolled on, and the fervor of the primitive Church was gradually dying away, it became imperative to institute a positive precept obliging all the faithful to go to Holy Communion at least once a year, and that during the Paschal time. The twenty-fourth canon of the Fourth Council of Lateran says: "All the faithful of both sexes, after they have arrived at the age of discretion, shall faithfully confess their sins to their parish priest at least once a year." And the Holy Council of Trent confirms the same when it says: "If any one denies that all the faithful are bound each year at least, at Easter time, to receive Holy Communion let him be anathema" (Sess. 13, Can. 9).

It is to be observed that the precept to receive Holy Communion, *at least once a year*, was occasioned by the negligence of the faithful in approaching the holy table; and that the spirit of the Church with a view to frequent Communion always remained what it was in the early days of Christianity, when the faithful, in the fervor of their love, appeared daily at the divine banquet. Of this we are assured by documentary evidence from the writings of the Fathers, and from decrees of various Councils of the Church. At first a law was enacted obliging all the faithful to receive the blessed Eucharist at least three times a year—that is, at the three great festivals, Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, and this was faithfully observed until the beginning of the thirteenth century, when, in the year 1214, the Council of Lateran

limited the obligation to once a year—at Paschal time; and then under pain of the severest ecclesiastical penalties.

That the Church in her solicitude for the spiritual welfare of her children found it imperative to institute such a precept, should fill the souls of the faithful with shame and confusion. Why should such a precept be necessary? Is it thus that the gratitude of Christians is shown for this mystery of unfathomable love? Going back in spirit through the corridors of time to the room of the last supper and the touching scene in the Garden of Olives, on the memorable night of the institution of this august Sacrament, who could ever believe that the ingratitude of Christians should force the Church to bind them by a law under the severest penalties to partake of this mystery of eternal love?

PROMISE OF THE EUCHARIST

What human phraseology can adequately describe the scene of the institution of this loving mystery and the circumstances connected with it. On the beautiful shores of the Sea of Tiberias a vast multitude of people, gathered from the surrounding districts and from across the sea, sought Jesus, to listen to the words of heavenly wisdom which fell from His sacred lips. The occasion was a memorable one; for He had on the day before miraculously increased and multiplied bread in the desert to feed five thousand persons. And now the same people in admiration of the stupendous miracle, by which the seemingly inflexible laws of matter were suspended, flocked around Him in astonishment at the wonders which He wrought.

When the beautiful glow of the early dawn appears over the golden gates of the east, it is a sign that the gladsome light of day is near at hand. And when the full and rich summer blossom is ready to fall, you know that the fruit will soon begin to ripen. So the miraculous multiplication of corporal food which the people witnessed in the desert was a guarantee of the fulfilment of the promise the Saviour was now about to make. When the excitement of the people over the wonders they had seen was at its utmost tension He brought home to

them another miracle of the far and distant past: Their fathers ate manna in the desert and were dead. This food from heaven which rained down in the desert nourished their bodies only; but He would give them a food which would nourish their souls and give them everlasting life. And this food was to be His own Flesh and Blood. So the multiplication of bread and fishes by which He fed the multitudes across the Sea of Tiberias was to be followed by a multiplication of His own Flesh and Blood to feed the multitudes of the generations of His Church to the end of time. For He said in the words of my text: "Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi. 54).

INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST

Days flew by. The time was drawing nigh when the Saviour was to close His mission on earth; and He was to consummate the Sacrifice which was to satisfy for sin and to reconcile fallen, guilty man to his Creator. His last supper was in preparation. In His undying love His beloved Apostles must share with Him this parting hour. They are in a spacious dining-hall where they are to eat the pasch according to the ceremonial of the law. The shadows of night falling over the neighboring Garden of Olives, and the deep sighing sound of the wind through the trees as if in lamentation, added to the solemnity of the scene. It is not a time for playful words or parables. He is as a person making a last will and testament, and only the most serious words and the most clearly understood have any part in such a solemnity. When, therefore, He took bread in His sacred hands and said: "This is my body"; and the chalice with the wine in it, and said: "Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins," He gave expression to words which in the clearest terms signify the mystery which took place (Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28).

And then conferring on the Apostles the fulness of power which was to remain forever in the Church to perpetuate the same holy mystery, He fulfilled the promise which He made at

Capernaum, when He said: "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John vi. 52). The words which He spoke to them in all their sublime simplicity conferred the power on the pastors of His Church to perpetuate the miracle to the end of time: "Do this for a commemoration of me."

CONCLUSION

Such is the touching story of the institution of this august Sacrament. It was at the most solemn hour of parting with His Apostles before His death; He was publishing His last will and testament: *"Do this for a commemoration of me"*; He was giving a pledge of His eternal love and of future happiness; and He was establishing a precept—a law. Surely then all the faithful should rejoice in enjoying the privilege of receiving this heavenly Sacrament; and there should be no such thing as delaying to approach the holy table until such a time as obedience to the command of the Church forces one to receive Holy Communion. It is the Sacrament of infinite love, and love rather than obedience should be the motive which should actuate the faithful to approach frequently the holy table to receive the divine pledge of everlasting happiness. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (John vi. 55).

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PASSION SUNDAY

SUBJECT

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: THE SIN OF LYING

TEXT

And if I shall say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar.—JOHN viii. 55.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The words of to-day's Gospel were spoken by our Lord in Jerusalem, perhaps in the Temple, during the feast of Tabernacles, about seven months before His death. Disputes concerning His divine mission were at this time forced upon Him by the doctors of the Law. To the saving words which Jesus spoke to them they not only returned unbelief and opposition, but actual abuse and blasphemy, saying He was a Samaritan and had a devil. But the Saviour replied to their wicked accusations by telling them that He had not a devil, that He knew His Father whom they knew not; that He honored His Father, while they had dishonored Him; that He spoke the truth, but they were given to lies.

We all feel a just indignation at the insincerity and dishonesty of those Jewish doctors; we feel, as our Saviour said, that they were liars. There is scarcely anything more abominable in our eyes than a liar, a perverter of the truth; and yet how prevalent is this vice! Falsehood and dissimulation are met with on all hands, are often condoned as things of little moment, and sometimes even praised as accomplishments and signs of special mental endowments and versatility. Let us consider, however, the gravity of this vice of lying.

I. **The nature of a lie.** 1. A lie is the assertion of what one does not believe, or the denial of what one does believe; in other words, it is the expression, in words or signs, of that which is contrary to one's mind. 2. Lies are of various kinds: jocose, officious, and malicious. 3. A *jocose* lie is one that is told

with the intention of pleasing or amusing. Such lies are only venial sins, and are lies only in name, if told in such a way as to make it plain that they are not to be taken seriously. 4. An *officious* lie is one that is told with the intention of helping one's self or another, without hurting anyone. Lies of this kind are not permissible, for it is not lawful to do evil that good may result (Rom. iii. 8). 5. A *malicious* lie is one that is told with the intention of injuring others. The gravity of such lies is according to the injury actually done, but is greatest when the lie is told in a trial under oath against one's neighbor. In this last case a lie has the additional malice of perjury and sacrilege, and is more harmful than any private untruth. 6. A sacrilegious lie is one told to the Holy Ghost in confession.

II. The malice of a lie. 1. Every real lie is a sin, mortal or venial, according to its nature, (a) because it is forbidden by God; (b) because it perverts the faculty given us by God of communicating our thoughts to others; it is an abuse of the wonderful gift of speech; (c) because it is contrary to God Himself, who is truth, and is an imitation of the devil, the father of lies (John viii. 44); (d) because it is an injury against our fellow man whom it leads into error; (e) because it is an injury to society, since the public welfare demands that we be able to rely on men's words. What the counterfeiter and forger do, the liar does in his measure. 2. An indication of the baseness of lying is found in the fact that all right-thinking men have ever regarded it as cowardly and dishonorable. 3. It is, therefore, never lawful to tell a lie for any purpose whatever; but we may conceal the truth, if there be a just reason for doing so, that is when there is the duty of guarding the reputation of another, of preventing great evils, or of keeping a secret confidentially committed to us. 4. One is not allowed to conceal the truth, however, when his neighbor has the right to know it, *e.g.*, when put under oath in trials, or when another's advantage requires that the truth be made known.

EXHORTATION. 1. In order to avoid the vice of lying, (a) let us be careful in small matters regarding the truth; (b) let us avoid all unnecessary loquacity; (c) let us always remember that insincerity is hateful both to God and man (Ecclus. vii. 14; Wis. i. 11; Prov. xii. 22; Ecclus. xx. 26). 2. Parents should train their children to be scrupulously truthful.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

THE SIN OF LYING

To all conscientious persons is addressed the divine command that in all their intercourse with society, in every conversation, they should speak the truth at all times from the sincerity of their hearts; that they should utter nothing injurious to the character of another, not even of those by whom they know they have been injured and persecuted. For they should always remember that between them and others there exists such a close social bond that they are all members of the same body.

THE MALICE OF LYING

In order that the faithful may be more disposed to avoid the vice of lying, the pastor will place before them the extreme lowness and disgrace and turpitude of this sin. In the Sacred Scriptures the devil is called "the father of lies"; for as, "he stood not in the truth, he is a liar and the father thereof."[1]

But to banish from amongst the faithful so great a sin, the pastor will add the mischievous consequences of which this vice is the source. These consequences are without number; and the pastor, therefore, must be content with pointing out the chief kinds of evil and calamity that are caused by lying.

In the first place, he will inform them how grievously lies offend God and how deeply a liar is hated by God. "Six things there are," says Solomon, "which the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul detesteth: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked

[1] John viii. 44.

plots, feet that are swift to run into mischief, a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, etc." [2] Who, then, can protect or save from severest chastisements the man who is thus the object of God's special hate?

Again, what more wicked, what more base than, as St. James says, "with the same tongue, by which we bless God and the Father, to curse men, who are made after the likeness of God," so that "out of the same fountain flows sweet and bitter water." [3] The tongue, which was before employed in giving praise and glory to God, afterwards, as far as it is able, by lying treats the Author of truth with ignominy and dishonor. Hence, liars are excluded from a participation in the bliss of heaven. To David asking, "Lord! who shall dwell in thy tabernacle?" the Holy Spirit answers: "He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue." [4]

Lying is also attended with this very great evil that it is an almost incurable disease. For since the guilt of the calumniator cannot be pardoned, unless satisfaction be made to the calumniated person, and since as we have already observed, this duty is difficult for those who are deterred from its performance by false shame and a foolish idea of dignity, it follows that he who continues in this sin perseveres in a course which must ultimately lead to the unending punishments of hell. Let no one indulge the delusive hope of obtaining the pardon of his calumnies or detractions, until he has repaired the injury which they have inflicted, whether this was done in a court of justice or in private and familiar conversation.

But the evil consequences of lying are widespread and extend to society at large. By duplicity and lying good faith and truth, which form the closest links of human society, are dissolved, confusion ensues, and men seem to differ in nothing from demons.

The pastor will also teach that loquacity is to be avoided. By avoiding loquacity the other evils of the tongue will be obviated, and a preventive opposed to lying, from which loquacious persons can scarcely abstain.

[2] Prov. vi. 16. etc. [3] James iii. 9, 11. [4] Ps. xiv. 1, 3.

EXCUSES MADE BY LIARS

There are those who seek to justify their duplicity either by the unimportance of what they say, or by the example of the worldly wise who, they claim, lie at the proper time. The pastor will correct such erroneous ideas by answering that "the wisdom of the flesh is death." [5] He will exhort his people in all their difficulties and dangers to trust in God, not in the artifice of lying; for those who have recourse to subterfuge, plainly show that they trust more to their own prudence than to the providence of God.

Those who lay the blame of their own falsehood on others, who first deceived them by lies, are to be taught the unlawfulness of avenging their own wrongs, and that evil is not to be rendered for evil, but rather that evil is to be overcome by good.[6] Even if it were lawful to return evil for evil, it would not be to our interest to harm ourselves in order to get revenge. The man who seeks revenge by uttering falsehood inflicts very serious injury on himself.

Those who plead human frailty are to be taught that it is a duty of religion to implore the Divine assistance, and not to yield to human infirmity.

Those who, in excuse of their guilt, allege habit are to be admonished to endeavor to acquire the contrary habit of speaking the truth; particularly as evil habit, far from extenuating, is an aggravation of guilt.

There are some who adduce in their own justification the example of others, who, they contend, constantly indulge in falsehood and perjury. Such persons are to be reminded that bad men are not to be imitated, but reproved and corrected; and that, when we ourselves are addicted to the same vice, our admonitions have less influence in reprehending and correcting it in others.

With regard to those who defend their conduct by saying that to speak the truth is often attended with inconvenience, the pastor will answer that such an excuse is an accusation, not

[5] Rom. vii. 6.
[6] Rom. xii. 17, 21.

a defence, since it is the duty of a Christian to suffer any inconvenience rather than utter a falsehood.

There remain two other classes of persons who seek to justify a departure from truth, those who say that they tell lies for the sake of amusement, and those who plead motives of interest, claiming that without recourse to lies, they can neither buy nor sell to advantage. The pastor should endeavor to reform both these kinds of liars. He will correct the former by showing how strong a habit of sinning is contracted by their practice, and by strongly impressing upon them the truth that "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account in the day of judgment." [7] As for the second class, he will upbraid them with greater severity, because their very excuse is a most serious accusation against themselves, since they show thereby that they yield no faith or confidence to these words of our Lord: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [8]

Sermon

Lying, Calumny and Detraction

BY THE REV. FRANCIS M. HARVEY

The tongue is a fire a world of iniquity.—The tongue is placed among our members, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell.—James iii. 6.

INTRODUCTION

St. James, in his admirable Epistle, gives us a graphic sketch of the good and the evil that flow from the power of speech. He reminds us how glorious is this gift in itself, how noble and ennobling, and also how dread an evil it becomes through misuse. "By it," he says, "we bless God the Father; and by it we curse men who are made after the likeness of God."

The evils that spring from a misuse of the gift of speech are many and various. We will confine ourselves to those against the Eighth Commandment, by which are forbidden all untruthfulness, insincerity, calumny and detraction.

[7] Matt. xii. 36. [8] Matt. vi. 33.

LYING

Lying is well called the monster evil; monstrous in extent, for it is the most prevalent of sins, monstrous in its result, for it is a direct attack upon God Himself, who is called Truth, and it is ruinous to a man's character and to his soul.

We must not deceive ourselves in regard to this vice. Any variation from the truth, or what we honestly believe to be the truth, is a lie, and is branded by the Almighty with the penalty attached to that sin, "Yes, I told a lie, but there was no harm in it." There is no such lie. Its essence is harmful, for it is contrary to God; it is, as the philosophers tell us, by its very nature the great "utterly evil" thing. A "white" lie is a whitewashed lie; its true color is necessarily black. Any word or act of ours that intentionally deceives one who has a right to know the truth is a lie, and any euphemistic expression we may attach to it, such as "white," "harmless," or "jocose," but serves to cheat us as to its true nature, and does not remove a jot of guilt from our souls. We say to children they must not tell "stories"; we should forbid them to lie. A story is something pleasant, attractive; to give its name to a thing so black and ugly as lying is in itself a lie. The Sacred Scripture uses no euphemism. Falsehoods and lies are the names used, even the milder term "untruth" does not appear. We should imitate the Word of God in our speech and call these ugly things by their ugly names.

A common form of lie is that of excuse, a combination of cowardice and folly; cowardice in that the liar fears the consequence of some act or word—which may in itself have been justifiable; folly in that he prefers to offend Almighty God rather than one of His creatures. This form of lying is recognized as the weapon of the weak, but woe to those who encourage or develop this habit in weaklings, who terrify children into the use of falsehood and subterfuge, who make a lie the only refuge from punishment of those under their charge.

Pride, too, is prolific of lies. The silly exaggeration, the pose, the ambiguous way of narrating certain of our adventures, or our actions, spring from pride, a wish to show off.

Pride itself is a lie. The father of lies became such because of his pride; and the man who makes pride a dominant trait of his character is a living lie.

Lies told in jest, to raise a laugh, or to cause astonishment, is another division of this subject. Often these are not lies at all, for they do not really deceive; or at least do not deceive those who have a right to certain information. Hence they are in no way sins. But so subtly does this poison of the serpent—the father of lies—permeate all forms of insincerity, that jocose lying is often attended with sin. The jest that holds a brother up to ridicule, that injures the reverence due to authority, that arouses anger and feelings of revenge, that induces rash swearing, or in any way dims the brightness of the golden chain of Christian fellowship is a sin against charity, and possibly against justice. To tell a jocose lie that causes terror or alarm, that puts one to serious inconvenience, or in any way pains or wounds another must be placed in the same category. Then, too, there is always the danger of acquiring the habit of lying. He who lies constantly in jest will very soon lie in earnest. The bloom is too easily rubbed from the fair fruit of honesty for us to trifle with it in any way. There are many other methods of amusing our friends, and displaying our superior wit or superabundant humor, without risking the wounding of our fellows, or the warping of our characters in the direction of sin.

The most heinous form of lying is that expressed in the wording of the Eighth Commandment, bearing false witness, or perjury. The man who enters a court of justice, and, after solemnly taking God to witness that his words are absolute truth, falsely swears away the life or character of another, or in any way defeats the end of justice, is guilty of a sin before which ordinary crime pales. He has committed a blasphemy in invoking the God of truth to father a lie; he has sinned against justice in blackening the character of his neighbor; he has added to his calumnies a publicity of scandal that it could scarcely otherwise acquire. Truly does the Scripture say that "a man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is like a dart and a sword and a sharp arrow."

There are lies acted as well as lies spoken. The man or woman who preserves a pious exterior that their neighbors may deem them especially virtuous may be acting a lie. The look of seraphic innocence that brightens the face of the culprit when his wrong-doing is discovered, and the wrong-doer is unknown, is an acted lie. The silence that closes the lips of the guilty one when another is charged with his sin is also an offense against God's command. Any deception, in a word, that misleads, or is intended to mislead those who have a right to certain knowledge, is a lie, be that deception a word, a look, a posture, or mere silence.

A form of lying that receives little condemnation from us, yet which is most pernicious, is flattery. Its purpose is usually the gaining of some advantage—generally popularity. It is a network of lies; words, looks and actions in subtle combination. It is most dangerous to those who receive it, and deadly to those who practice it.

Glance for a moment at the plain truthfulness and sincerity of our Divine Model, whose followers we claim to be. Note His absolute truth in all the relations of His mortal life. During His stay upon earth He came in contact with all sorts and conditions of men. With the Pharisees, who have their following to-day in a large body of apparently very good people; strict church-goers; occasional recipients of the Sacraments; ornaments—more or less—of Christian society. He met those who philosophized about religion; who dabbled in the latest thought of the day on doctrine and on ethics. He conversed with the self-opinionated lawyers; with the talented young man who looked upon himself as a genius; with the half-cynical, wholly curious host who narrowly watched and freely criticized His actions at table. The impulsively pious, too, came to Him. They whose religion was a sentimental one, an affair of the emotions, wherein self-denial had no place. Yet He was the same, absolutely the same to all. The philosophers, doctors, Pharisees met the same, clear, unwavering sincerity and truth that showed mercy to the Magdalen, and gently plucked the stones from the hands of the executioners of the woman taken in adultery. But to them the truth was not

merciful, for it was true—sincere. He brought their shallow hypocrisy, baseness, chicanery, pride and self-complacency into the sunlight of His uncompromising truthfulness, and, pointing to their lying words and fraudulent acts, said, "O ye hypocrites." He never closed His eyes to the real state of those He met: was never blinded by their learning or authoritative position; was never biased by a wish for popularity nor permitted truth to stand in abeyance that He might win followers to His cause.

He bluntly told the multitude who followed Him with words of praise for His teaching that they had come to Him not for the word of life, but for food—because He had worked a miracle on the loaves and fishes. To the flattering young man who approached Him with expressions of regard saying, "Good Master," He did not return the pleased salutation expected, but answered, "Why call you me good?" as if to say, "You are not honoring the goodness of my divine nature, or my teaching, but are trying to flatter me." He would not stoop to flatter others; He severely rejected flattery when offered to Himself—and all because it is a *lie*. He insisted that what was in the mind and heart of those who came to Him be displayed in the speech and in the actions. Such is our model on this point of truthfulness.

Lying is a sin against society and an offense against God. It attacks the very foundations of society. Men can live together and make progress only so long as they can trust one another. Civilization is based on mutual dependence, and mutual dependence without mutual confidence is unthinkable. The more flagrant violaters of this trust—the criminal class—society puts behind prison bars. Nor does society fail to punish the liar. He who is forever making lying excuses, who is ever ready with a denial or a plausible explanation when detected in or accused of wrong-doing, soon finds himself charged with things of which he is innocent, and his denials and excuses rejected. He has destroyed the confidence which his fellows should be able to place in his word. The "romancer" and the chronic exaggerater soon find even their lightest word, their most moderate statement disregarded and

themselves treated with contempt more or less lightly veiled. He who pretends to virtue or to cleverness which he does not possess, receives no credit for those qualities to which he may justly lay claim, while he is cut off from improvement by his pretense to perfection.

Lying is an offense against God, for it attacks His very nature, truth. It is hard for us to have a realizing sense of this attribute of the divine, but consider it in the Person of our Saviour, and you will gain some idea of its nature.

When we say that Christ is true we mean that He is absolutely and unchangeably the same. Everything may change and shift and alter, but the Son of God knows no shadow of change. Very clearly does St. John bring out this fact. Looking at the judgment in vision, he beholds in the Judge the Master whose best beloved he was. He had laid his head upon that breast, he had looked into those eyes, and been greeted by the tender smile of welcome from those lips. The great Judge is, he knows, his friend. Yet on beholding Him, St. John "*fell at his feet as though dead!*" Why? Because St. John knew that the Saviour's warm, personal love for him did not alter one iota the piercing truth of His judgment and His penalties. St. John knew that the sentence passed upon his life and upon his acts would be in absolute accord with that life and those acts. He would be accepted into eternal life because he had fitted himself for that acceptance; he would be cast into outer darkness had he failed in this regard. In the judgment the Saviour's truth is dominant. He will separate the good from the wicked. Why? Because He hates the wicked and loves the good? By no means; but because the wicked are wicked and the good are good, and because He Himself is *true*. He will mete out punishment to the sinner. Why? Because sin by its very nature demands punishment—holds the punishment within itself—and because Christ is *true*. He would not be God if He were otherwise. In Him there is no alteration nor shadow of change.

This is what we mean when we say that our Lord is true; that He is the *truth*. He sees things exactly as they are, and represents and judges them exactly as they are. It is His very essence so to

do. And when we claim to be Christians, followers of Christ, we claim first of all to be true and truthful—to see life and its events exactly as they are, and to report them exactly as we see them. Lying, insincerity, subterfuge, exaggeration, are of the devil. The great warfare is between truth and falsehood, between God and the devil, and if we claim to be soldiers of Jesus Christ we should not array ourselves in the armor of the father of lies.

SLANDER

If lying in itself is so hateful to God, how much more hateful must slander be, slander which violates truth, justice and charity. How God regards it is shown very clearly in the Book of Numbers, where we read that when the Israelites were advancing toward the Promised Land, Miriam, the sister of Moses, and Aaron, her brother, went about the camp calumniating Moses, because they were averse to the latter's wife. Almighty God stopped the onward progress of the people, summoned the culprits before His presence, upbraided them, and then withdrew the pillar of cloud, leaving Miriam covered with leprosy. Could God have shown His detestation of a sin more plainly? Because of this slander He had stopped the progress of the chosen people toward the Land of Promise, withdrew the guiding cloud, and stricken the guilty one with the most loathsome of all diseases. His detestation of this sin is no less now than it was then. The soul that is guilty of this offense is stopped on its way to heaven, the guiding of God's grace is removed from it, and a moral leprosy descends upon it. Like leprosy, slander is a loathsome thing, shunned and hated by all who are themselves sound. The habitual slanderer finds himself shunned and avoided, for the cry of his spiritual uncleanness rings in his every word.

A peculiarity of the slanderous story is that no one owns it. It is like the little stone spoken of in the Scriptures, "cut without hands out of the mountain," which smote the goodly statue of gold and iron and clay and laid it low. Slander, like the "little stone," came into being "without hands," but every hand is outstretched to give it momentum in its onward course,

while each disowns the destruction wrought when the fair character lies in ruins.

In England there used to be a game played called "scandal." The company sat in a circle. One whispered some story—generally a bit of gossip—to his neighbor, who in turn repeated it to the one next to him, and so on to the end. The amusement—and, as a rule, the astonishment—came when the story told by the first was compared with that received by the last. Truly an instructive game.

The consequence of calumny on its victim is incalculable. How many a man has lost his position, his reputation, and his honor because of the false accusation of some slanderous tongue! Who will repair this injury? The thief may reform, may labor honestly and gain enough to pay back what he has stolen, may face his judge on the last day with his debt canceled. But how will the slanderer restore the reputation he has filched? His retraction will not be believed, and will not reach all the places whither his calumny has penetrated. He owes a debt which he can never pay: a debt which he contracted without any gain to himself. Truly has the poet said:

> "Who steals my purse, steals trash;
> But he who filches from me my good name,
> Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
> And makes me poor indeed."

How severe, then, must be the judgment against the calumniator! All the suffering he has caused—the bitterness of soul, the privation, aye, perhaps the sin and consequent eternal destruction he has brought upon his victim—he must bear before the throne of God, unpaid, uncanceled. Surely "they who do such things are worthy of death."

DETRACTION

Detraction is a more insidious as it is a more common form of this sin against justice. Detraction is the telling of the fault of our neighbor to another who knew nothing of it, or the remaining silent when our neighbor's honor is attacked and we could defend him, or at least mention extenuating circumstances.

The one who is guilty of detraction usually defends himself by asserting that he is speaking the truth. This is far from being an extenuating circumstance. The injury done is often all the greater because of the whole or partial truth of the statement. When a man is forced to admit that the charge is substantially true, what hope has he of establishing his injured reputation? He who has suffered from slander can at least gain the championship and the sympathy of some few who have heard the charge, but the victim of detraction is forced to hang his head in shame, or to bear with what silent fortitude he can the cold looks and harsh criticisms that are meted out to him.

They who appeared against our Lord at His trial are known as the false witnesses, yet their testimony was in part true. They said, "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." What He really said was, "If you destroy this temple (the temple of His body), in three days I will raise it up." Strange that the professed enemies of Christ should find so many disciples among those who claim to be followers of the Incarnate Charity.

There are many self-styled "honest" people, who make a virtue not only of their ill-temper, but of their habit of repeating stories derogatory to the characters of their neighbors. They say that they "believe in plain speaking," "always tell honestly what they know," regard as hypocrites those who condone or pass over in silence the faults of others. What a rock of scandal must the Saviour be to such? When the woman taken in adultery had been driven into His presence by her "honest" accusers, He did not bend His ear greedily to hear the details of her guilt, but silently bowing His head, that He might not witness her confusion, bade the innocent among her accusers cast the first stone. When we are tempted to hurl the stone of gossip or detraction, let us pause and give ear to the Saviour's voice—sounding now as then—which bids us look into our hearts and our own lives, and to refrain from reproach until we can find them stainless.

Remember, too, there is a detraction of action as well as of

word. The quietly appreciative smile, the silent head-shake, when some brother's good name is assailed, is but a more cowardly way of spreading the damning story. We can at least show our disapproval of the sin of detraction that is enacted before us. We would feel called upon to check some ribald or obscene exhibition that took place in our presence, on the ground that all immodesty is offensive to God: but He who proclaimed the Sixth Commandment proclaimed also the Eighth, and the thunders of Sinai echoed for one as for the other. His condemnation rings in no unmistakable terms. "Thou shalt not be a detractor nor a whisperer among my people." "Be not called a whisperer, and be not taken in thy tongue and confounded, for confusion and repentance is upon a thief, and an evil mark of disgrace upon the double tongued, but to the whisperer hatred, enmity and reproach." "The talebearer shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated by all, and he that shall abide with him shall be hateful; but the silent and wise man shall be honored."

PERORATION

We must take to heart the lesson that there is no limit to the harm an unbridled tongue can do—no limit to the good a tongue restrained to the government of the Saviour can accomplish. The lie, the calumny, the detraction, have left deep and wide the marks of destruction on human society; defiling minds, ruining characters, driving off social and domestic peace, transforming blessings into curses, "working havoc in the temple of Christ into which we all have been built." As we contemplate the scene of misery and wretchedness wrought by the abuse of the glorious gift of speech, the lying word, the veiled innuendo, the bitter calumny that takes a fair name and fouls it in the mire of falsehood, do we not realize the truth of the description in St. James: "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of our nativity, and is set on fire by hell."

God grant that we can look at this dark scene with feelings only of horror and condemnation; that not one of us must needs say with deep contrition of heart, "I, too, have had part in this

accursed thing; I, too, have defiled and marred my soul by my evil words."

We must realize this, one and all, that our speech is a mighty power for good or ill and treat it accordingly. We should bridle our tongue, but nowhere does it need more careful watching than in the things that pertain to the divine virtue of truthfulness. In the words of a noted writer on this subject, "Most of us have never thought of estimating the power of anything so common and familiar as speech. But the mightiest forces that actuate the world are those that are unobserved just because they are common and familiar." The crash of the thunder fills us with dread, though the storm after all strike but a chimney or a tree. The earthquake is a cause of fear, though it pass off in harmless rumblings. But the breath of air, which no one notes, taint it and the whole world reeks with pestilence; remove it, and every living thing will perish. The sun which rises daily to run its course gives life and growth to plant and animal, and the slow current which sweeps over the Pacific, bearing with it a genial warmth, tempers our air, and makes the land by the western sea a garden of the earth. So it is with our speech. It is as common as the air we breathe, as the sunshine we welcome, as the water that washes our shores; but it is mighty in its operation; it is universal. It never sleeps. God's work or else the devil's work it is forever doing and it is our business to see, as far as possible, that the work is God's work. We may claim no peculiar right to advise our friends. But whether you are always blotting out the line that marks off right from wrong in matters of speech; whether you are ever ready to excuse the convenient lie, whether the calumniator, or the talker whose conversation is punctuated with tittle-tattle can count on your ready smile and listening ear, whether you are ever ready to turn others toward gossip and frivolity, makes a greater difference than you can compute—a difference as between life and death. Oh, that our dear Lord, who willed to be called the "Word," because He was the revealer of God to man, would teach us to follow Him, as in all things so in that. It is in our power to reveal God's faith and God's truth and God's justice which our fidelity and God's grace has erected in our hearts; and woe to us if we do not reveal it; woe

to us if we do not keep in mind the solemn warning: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

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PALM SUNDAY

SUBJECT

THE VICE OF AVARICE

TEXT

The disciples seeing it, had indignation, saying: To what purpose is this waste? for this might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. . . . Then went one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, to the chief priests. And said to them: What will you give me, and I will deliver him unto you? But they appointed him thirty pieces of silver. —MATT. XXVI. 8, 9, 14, 15.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The anointing of our Lord by Mary took place at a banquet given in His honor at the home of Lazarus in Bethany, six days before the Passion. The murmur of the disciples spoken of by St. Matthew was most probably on the part of Judas alone, as St. John tells us, and was prompted not by a love of the poor, but by the avarice of the ill-fated Apostle (John xii. 6). Judas, like the other eleven, had been chosen by Christ Himself for great work in the Church, he had left all things to follow the Master, and for a while seemed to get on well. But to his own utter ruin he was given charge of the money of the little group; this brought out and developed his deadly passion. The demon of avarice was in the man, and little by little he

began to set aside from the common fund something for himself. His passion increased and waxed strong, until finally it had such complete control of him as to lead him to betray his divine Master for the miserable sum of thirty pieces of silver, or about $15.00 in our money. His end was suicide and despair. He who had received such a high call, who had been blessed with special graces and favored with the intimate friendship of Christ, who had been destined as a chosen Apostle later to sit on one of the twelve thrones to judge the tribes of Israel, was eventually led through love of money to die by his own bloody hand, a traitor. Such is the awfulness of the passion of avarice.

I. **The nature of avarice.** This vice is an inordinate desire for, or attachment to riches. To wish for or to possess riches is not sinful in itself, since every creature of God is good (1 Tim. iv. 4); but the unregulated desire for these things is sinful. 2. Indications of an inordinate desire of riches are: (a) if one gives all his time and attention to acquiring possessions; (b) if one finds his greatest happiness and end in life in the acquisition or holding of wealth; (c) if one uses sinful means to acquire wealth. 3. There are two popular errors regarding avarice: (a) that only the rich are avaricious; (b) that only the miserly are avaricious. On the contrary, even the poor and the prodigal are often more avaricious than many rich or miserly persons. The essence of avarice consists in an inordinate desire to have money, and in this sense it is one of the commonest of vices. Money procures the indulgence of all the passions, and hence, as Holy Scripture says, "all things obey money" (Eccles. x. 19).

II. **The evils of avarice.** 1. The malice of this sin consists in this, that it is a species of idolatry, as St. Paul says (Coloss. iii. 5). The virtue of religion makes us recognize God as our last end, and believe in Him, hope in Him and love Him. The vice of avarice makes us place all our supreme faith, hope and love in money. 2. The dangers of avarice are seen in two things: (a) covetousness is often not easily distinguished from

lawful desire of temporal things, and the possession of wealth brings with it so many worldly advantages that its acquisition easily takes control of the heart; (b) avarice is the hardest of all the vices to root out, because, as experience shows, it increases with age, it has the support of all the other passions to which it ministers, and its abandonment often requires the restitution of ill-gotten gains. 3. Avarice is the cause of numerous sins (1 Tim. vi. 10). It causes: (a) anxiety of mind, dissensions, neglect of religion, and even abandonment of faith (Matt. vi. 24); (b) hardness of heart, want of charity and justice, even among relatives (1 Tim. vi. 9; Ecclus. x. 9); (c) blindness of mind, due to self-interest.

III. Remedies for avarice. 1. For miserliness the best remedies are generosity to the poor, liberality to employees, confidence in divine providence, and the realization that the miser gets nothing for his trouble here or hereafter. 2. To combat the love of money which has for its purpose the satisfaction of other passions these other passions should be curbed and moderated. 3. General cures for avarice are: (a) We should remember that the possession of wealth is attended with much trouble, and must be surrendered sooner or later (Luke xii. 20); (b) we should reflect that it is only wise to lay up treasure in heaven where moths do not corrupt, nor thieves steal (Matt. vi. 19, 20).

Lessons. 1. Let us at all times try to use this world's goods not as ends in themselves, but as means to our salvation. 2. We should learn from the horrible end of Judas the evils to which the vice of avarice leads; and from the example of Christ dying on the cross, without even the possession of His own clothes, the lesson of detachment from all this world can give.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Third Sunday of Lent); Part IV (See Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermon

The Desire of Riches

BY THE REV. F. X. MCGOWAN, O.S.A.

Worldliness is the bane of Christian life. It makes men sell their souls for fleeting success, and it prefers temporal things to God's love. St. Paul warns us against the love of worldly wealth when he writes: "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition; for the desire of money is the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 9, 19).

THE INJURY DONE TO OUR TEMPORAL WELFARE BY THE DESIRE OF RICHES

Among the pagan philosophers there were many who had the greatest contempt for riches. St. Jerome tells us that Crates left all things for study. Democritus parted with a fortune large enough to have furnished a banquet for the immense army of Xerxes, for the pursuit of knowledge. One of these sages, filled with contempt, cast his wealth into the sea. These men, however, were not actuated by the motives which induce Christians to despise riches. They contemned worldly possessions, but they also despised the poor whom they could have assisted with their wealth.

We should not desire riches on account of our temporal welfare. 1. Because riches never satisfy us; 2. Because they are burdensome and destructive to our peace; 3. Because the desire of riches is unavailing and harmful.

1. Experience teaches us that if the poor complain about the miseries of their condition, the rich complain more; if the poor

complain, it is because they have no patience and not because they are poor. We meet with a larger number of contented people among the poor than of happy people among the rich. Though we were to possess all the wealth of the world, we would be constrained to say with Solomon: "All is vanity" (Eccles. i. 2). But, unfortunately, the more we possess, the more we covet, and the more wretched we feel when we fail in our desires. Covetousness is an insatiable appetite, that is never satisfied. We are like the dropsical man, whose thirst increases accordingly as he drinks.

What contentment can a man find in riches when he does not make use of them? If I own a bag of gold that I dare not touch, it is of no more benefit to me than a handful of sand. My barn may be filled with grain, my house stocked with valuable furniture, but they may be of no more earthly use to me than a tea plantation in China which I do not own. Sometimes we meet with persons who are mortally afraid to touch their wealth and who are so miserly as to deny themselves the necessaries of life. How wretched they must be! To starve one's self and family is unworthy an honest man and a Christian. Such niggardliness is shameful, and makes a man contemptible in the eyes of his fellow-man, poor and miserable in the midst of abundance, and guilty in the sight of God.

Even when we use our wealth, is it really an advantage to have a great supply of it? Fine clothing, delicate viands, and splendid display do not make us happier. Often the cottage of the poor man contains more contentment than the stately mansion of the rich. Wealth brings only doubtful honor. If we are not righteous, praise bestowed on us is undeserved, and the very men who flatter us in public laugh at us in private. We may rejoice at the fact that we need not fear the loss of fortune, but how can we be sure of its stability? Men are beggared daily by unexpected turns of fortune. Did not Christ say to the rich man in the Gospel: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee" (Luke xii. 20). There is often small satisfaction in worldly wealth.

2. Riches are not desirable when we look at the anxiety and unrest that spring from them. Great wealth produces, according to the wise man, "vexation of mind" (Eccles. ii. 11). "They

fatigue us," says St. Bernard, "when we seek them (that is riches); they are a burden when we possess them, they defile us when we love them, and they afflict us when we lose them." The thorns which we hold in our open hand do not cause us the least pain, but if we close our hand tightly, we shall be deeply wounded by the sharp points. These thorns are worldly riches, which, when clasped to the heart, wound it deeply. A wise man who refuses his heart to money or despises it enjoys peace of mind to which the slaves of lucre are total strangers. How many rich men have confessed that they were infinitely more contented when they lived in poverty or moderate circumstances! The first Christians sold their lands and houses and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles, yet, as say the Acts (iv. 34), "neither was there any one needy among them." What, after all, does a man want on earth? St. Paul says: "Having food and wherewith to be covered, we are content" (1 Tim. vi. 8).

3. Our desire for riches is, generally speaking, vain and harmful. Notwithstanding the attendant dangers of riches, we all have a longing for them. We do not appreciate the treasure which is concealed beneath poverty or moderate competence. Our desire is unavailing. What is the advantage of wishing to be rich when God does not will that we should be so, and even withdraws from us the means of becoming rich? This desire is also harmful, because, as St. Paul says: "They that will become rich fall into temptation." We not only desire to be rich, but to be rich quickly. The Holy Ghost condemns the man who makes haste to be rich, and declares him "not free from sin" (Ecclus. xi. 10). In our days the craze is to become rich at any price. Accordingly men employ unlawful means to acquire wealth. They form associations, syndicates and combinations to govern trade and to oppress labor. They make use of usury, fraud and deceit to promote their schemes in acquiring wealth; they profit by public calamities, famine and scarcity to wring resources from needy hands. General misery feeds their covetousness. The passion for money is destructive to man's happiness here and hereafter. After the example of Solomon, let us desire neither riches nor poverty. If God has bestowed wealth upon us, let us use it moderately for our own and our neighbors' good. St. Augustine very justly says:

"Who would think that happiness consists in those things which the Son of God has taught us to despise?"

DESIRE OF RICHES IS INJURIOUS TO OUR ETERNAL PROSPECTS

We should not desire riches if we value our eternal happiness. Christ has said: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." Again, He declares: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix. 23, 24). These are awful words. Why is it, we may ask, so difficult for a rich man to obtain salvation? The reason is that it is nigh impossible to possess riches without loving them, and when once we love riches and become strongly attached to them, we easily forget our duty to God, ourselves, and our neighbor.

1. Riches lead us to forget our duty to God. The prophet Osee pictures Ephraim saying: "I am become rich, I have found me an idol" (xii. 8). There is only this difference between the idolator and the rich man: the former worships gold that has been made into a statue; the latter worships it in the form of money. The rich man devotes his time and energy to the amassing of this world's filthy lucre, and he fails thereby to serve God. His waking thoughts, aye, even his dreams center on what he may lose or gain in his business transactions. He forgets that every gift comes from God, he practically disavows all trust in Providence, and his only fear is that he may be reduced to poverty. Hence his continual complaints, his bad humor, when the times are not always prosperous.

St. Paul tells us that greed, the love of riches, has been the cause of many losing the faith: "The desire of money . . . which some coveting have erred from the faith." The sound of a piece of money has greater effect on a rich man's heart than the accents of the word of God. In vain the minister of the Lord preaches to him the truths of salvation; in vain he counsels the rich man to give good example. Why was it that the Pharisees contemned the doctrine of Jesus? Simply because they loved money, because their hearts were attached to the goods of earth. "The Pharisees who were covetous heard all these things, and they derided him" (Luke xvi. 14).

2. Riches cause us to neglect our duties to ourselves. When a man conceives a passion for any person or object, he has neither time nor thought for anything else. So it is with the rich man and his wealth. He is so engrossed with his revenues, investments and profits that he forgets all about his soul, or the decent support of his family, or the proper education of his children. And if he think of his family, he looks to its worldly advancement, and not to the virtuous picture it should present to God and men.

There are two very important questions which regard wealth, namely, how has it been acquired and what use is made of it? Riches have come to men so unjustly that their possession is a matter of conscience. There are very few large fortunes in the world that have not the note of injustice tagged to them. Even as we see placards in public places, telling us to beware of thieves, so does conscience warn us to beware of the road which has led avaricious men to hell. What dark clouds hover over some fortunes? They are rooted in usury, persecution of the widow and the orphan, unjust lawsuits and oppression of labor. Man's greed has choked the protesting voice of conscience. How has this wealth been employed? Often it has not been used, and it remains for the miser, as has been told of Henry VII of England, to gloat over in the still hours of the night, when all others are reposing. I know that there are rich and powerful men who have employed their wealth and influence to good purposes, because they feared God. But they are the exceptions. Riches are more often used to pursue ways of vice.

3. Riches make men sadly oblivious of the duties they owe their neighbors. A rich and influential man who does not fear God's judgments is always bound to tyrannize over his fellowmen. He seems to imagine that all other men were made to be subject to him alone. He is accordingly the most cruel taskmaster in the world. Entirely absorbed in himself and his wealth, he sees no rights in others which he is obliged to respect. Filled with pride, he endeavors by all means to raise himself to a level with those who are above him by virtue of birth or rank. He is a fool whose brain has been turned by money and who does not seem to know what he really is. He is dry and cool toward his

equals, disdainful toward those whom he believes beneath him, and cruel toward his dependents. Riches have been given him, we would believe, to make him contemptible and odious. The poor he holds in detestation, and his heart is as marble toward his debtors. Is it not true that it is the rich that oppress most the poor? Yet whence came their wealth? From the goods taken from the poor. What built their mansions? The sweat and blood of the poor. To the rich may be justly applied the words of the prophet: "In thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor and innocent" (Jer. ii. 34). Are we astonished at the fate of the rich man mentioned in the Gospel? "The rich man died, and he was buried in hell" (Luke xvi. 22). Such was the funeral sermon which the Holy Ghost preached when the rich glutton died. When we see the dangers to salvation which attend the accumulation of riches, we ought to be chilled in our desire for them. Yet, as St. Augustine remarks, "God does not condemn riches, but the heart that is attached to them." Solomon was rich, and he fell from grace not because he was rich. Abraham, Job, and many saints of the New Law were rich, yet they sanctified their lives in the midst of affluence. Poverty has its trials, but riches have their dangers. Both states may be hallowed by the practice of virtue and obedience to God's law. The fear of God should live in the hearts of both rich and poor. "Fear not, my son," said the aged Tobias, "we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God" (Tob. iv. 23).

Let us thank God for what we have and use it to our spiritual advantage. So shall we merit in heaven God, our eternal treasure. Amen.

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EASTER SUNDAY

SUBJECT

SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

TEXT

Let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.—1 Cor. v. 8.

Analysis

Introduction. St. Paul addressed these words to the faithful of Corinth, from Ephesus, around Easter time toward the end of his third missionary journey. He is referring to the Jewish custom of excluding all leaven from their houses before celebrating the Pasch, and he tells his Christian readers to celebrate the coming feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, by excluding from their souls the leaven of sin and wickedness, and by feasting with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. In other words, the Apostle is reminding the faithful of Corinth that the way to celebrate the new Pasch, the Feast of Easter, is to have their souls free from sin and adorned with the grace of Christ. As Christ, from the state of natural death, rose glorious and immortal on Easter Sunday, so the Christian, who wishes to be associated with his risen Lord and worthily to keep the great feast of the Resurrection, should rise from the state of sin and moral death to that of grace and life.

I. **The death of the soul is caused by mortal sin.** 1. This sin is called *mortal*, because it brings to man a two-fold death—spiritual death in this world, and, if not repented of, eternal death in the world to come. 2. The life of the soul is God, just as the life of the body is the soul (St. Aug.). Mortal sin separates the soul from God, and hence it causes death. This

spiritual death is not visible to our eyes, but it is more terrible than the death of the body since it causes so much greater loss. 3. Mortal sin deprives the soul of sanctifying grace, the gift of God, its most precious adornment. A soul in mortal sin is more disgusting in the sight of God than the rotten corpse of a dead dog is to us (St. Bernard). 4. With the loss of sanctifying grace the soul also loses the divine friendship, the sonship of God, and the right to heaven. 5. Mortal sin strips a person of all his past merits (Ezech. xviii. 24), and makes one incapable, while in that state, of doing anything deserving of heaven. 6. By reason of mortal sin the soul becomes subject to hell, the second death (Apoc. xx. 14, 15).

II. The resurrection of the soul to life is caused by grace. 1. Grace operates in the soul to restore all the lost wonders of supernatural life. Not only does it wash away the stain and guilt of sin, and cancel the debt of eternal punishment due to sin, but it brings back to the soul all its lost treasures and privileges. 2. With the forgiveness of mortal sin the soul becomes once more the temple of the Holy Ghost. 3. With the presence of God restored the soul recovers anew its life and most beautiful ornament, sanctifying grace, and all those wondrous powers and gifts of the Spirit which enable it to lead its supernatural existence here on earth. Grace gives to the soul the same charm that youth and life and beauty give to the body. 4. Grace brings back to the soul revived all the past merits that were destroyed by mortal sin, the ability of acquiring new merits, the divine favor and re-established sonship and right to life eternal.

EXHORTATION. 1. Gratitude to our risen Lord who, by His death and Resurrection, has made it possible for us to rise from the grave of sin to the life of grace. 2. As Christ rose from the darkness of the tomb, freed from the winding sheet of death, and all the fetters of the grave, so the soul risen from sin to the state of grace should cast aside those evil habits, those bad companionships, those sinful and worldly attach-

ments which have before enslaved it and bound it down to earth. 3. The body of the risen Saviour was endowed with glorious qualities—it was bright, immortal, swift of movement, incapable of being impeded in its actions by any obstacles. Likewise the soul risen from deadly sin takes on the brilliancy of sanctifying grace and the glow of heaven; it should be swift to heed God's impulses and fulfill His commands; it should be undeterred in the service of its glorified Master by any temptations, allurements, or other obstacles to its salvation; finally like Christ it should rise to die no more.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part I

(See Easter Sunday in Dogmatic Series)

Sermon

The Resurrection

BY THE REV. A. M. SKELLY, O.P.

THE GLORIOUS RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Before Jesus Christ the tomb was always looked upon as the fatal rock on which was wont to split and perish all human greatness. Death had triumphed over all, and no man had yet been found upon the earth who did not end his career by being made the prey of this devouring monster, who swallowed up all and disgorged none. In vain had the great ones of the world tried, in some sort, to survive their own discomfiture. They chose even to combat death in the very field of his fame and the place of his triumph, by raising to themselves costly mausoleums which had no other foundation than the nothingness of their dust. In vain had they tried to render at least their sepulchres glorious by engraving on them in marble and brass the titles of nobility which once was theirs.

All these garnishments served only to render their tombs more brilliant trophies of the conqueror, Death, and monuments the more illustrious of their overthrow. The bare

inscription written on their tombs is proof of this. The first two words will tell you all; you need go no further. The rest may, perhaps, tell you what they had been: but these alone will tell you what they are. "Here lieth," they will say: "here lieth this man, great according to the world, but little in the eyes of God; who, having been lifted up with pride and ambition like the waves of the sea, is finally come to dash himself in impotence against the sand of this tomb?"

Here he lies—that famous conqueror who had astonished the world with the fame of his exploits. The earth which he held captive under his laws was silent in his presence. But behold him in the end, a captive in the dark prison-house of death, where he is himself condemned to a silence everlasting.

But where human greatness meets with its overthrow, that of Jesus Christ begins to be more solidly established. The angels to-day engrave on His tomb an epitaph very different, indeed to that engraved on the tombs of men. "He is not here," they say, "He has arisen! Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

The prophet foretold that the Messias would display, for the first time in the world's history, a glorious sepulchre. A glorious sepulchre is not one in which the dead is enclosed. It is one wherein he is enclosed no longer, and from which he has come forth by the power of his own arm. And this one fact is argument enough, according to the prince of the Apostles, to prove His Divinity and the truth of the religion that He taught.

"My brethren," says St. Peter, addressing the Jews from the steps of the Supper-chamber on the great day of Pentecost, "We have amongst us still the tomb of David, the greatest man of our race. The dust of that monarch is still there enclosed. Go out to that of Jesus Christ, you will find His Body there no longer. He has rescued Himself from the arms of death. This Jesus Christ, whom you have crucified, whom I announce to you, is then greater than David. He is greater than man. He is Divine, and the religion which He preached to you is true."

He has conquered, then—this "Lion of the tribe of Juda!" He has conquered death itself! He is become more powerful,

it would seem, since He was crucified! He has bound that strong arm that had power since the beginning of the world to bind all human powers! He has gloriously triumphed; and this triumph of Jesus Christ over death and hell is the source of our triumph also, and of our glory—the invincible proof of our faith; the foundation of our hope; the source of all our graces.

NEED OF SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

But it is not enough for us to glory with our Saviour in His Resurrection from the tomb; we must share also in His triumph: and as He has arisen to a life of glory, so should we arise to a life of grace and Christian perfection modeled after His.

Brethren, we have sinned in the past; we have basely sunk into the grave of sin! And, oh, how many are there to-day, who, in spite of the graces of the holy Lenten season; in spite of the overwhelming graces of Redemption week; in spite of the joyous notes of the Easter bells proclaiming a jubilee of graces to the whole Church of Christ, still lie prone in the grave of mortal sin.

But, by the grace of God, we can arise; and by the power of that omnipotent Arm that raised our Saviour from the tomb, we also are enabled to break the bonds of spiritual death and lead a life conformable to that of the risen Saviour.

And this is what should engage our earnest attention to-day especially, if this bright Easter day should find us still shrouded in the winding bands of spiritual death.

FALSE RESURRECTION

But, brethren, I would not have you believe that every resurrection is commendable, is profitable to the soul, and pleasing to God, in Whose Name, apparently, it is effected. For there is a false resurrection; and there is an imperfect one. There is a resurrection that is to result only in a temporary spiritual life, and there is one that precipitates the soul into greater miseries.

We read in the Scriptures that the unhappy Saul, the first

King of Israel, being hard pressed by the Philistines and feeling himself abandoned by the Spirit of God on account of his sins, sought the witch of Endor and besought of her to raise for him the ghost of Samuel, the prophet, in order that she might declare to him the will of Heaven. And it pleased Almighty God to permit the ghost of Samuel to arise from the ground in the form of an aged man, clothed in a mantle. And addressing the king in tones of anger, he reproached him, saying. "Why do you come thus to trouble my repose? Know, then, that your crimes shall meet with their reward. To-morrow you and your sons shall die by the sword, and your kingdom shall pass to David, whose presence you cannot bear." This uprisal of Samuel from the tomb was not a true resurrection; it is but a phantom. That soul was not restored to conjunction with the body. Its presence there was a forced one, and one that portended dire evils to the unhappy king and all his family.

Ah, how many resurrections from sin at a time like this that are so only in appearance? How many who, driven by human respect, by the force of custom, by the threats of the Church's penalties—how many, I say, comply externally with the Paschal duty; rise, apparently, by confession and Communion; whilst all the time they retain their affection for sin—whilst they refuse to give up evil associations which were the cause of their former falls? They rise, indeed, but their resurrection is a phantom—is the ghost of a conversion. Their hearts are not warmed with the living fire of charity. Their minds are not enlightened by the light of grace. Their souls remain dead and buried in the grave of habitual sin, and their confessions and Communions call down upon them rather the chastisement of final impenitence, which is the forerunner of their everlasting ruin. There is, then, in the Christian world a false resurrection and one that portends dire evils to come.

IMPERFECT RESURRECTION

There is a second kind of resurrection spoken of in Scripture, a true and genuine one indeed, and one effected by the intervention of the Almighty power; but resurrection which time

will bring to naught, and which is destined to be swallowed up in the devastation which awaits all things perishable. Such is the resurrection recorded in the Gospel accomplished by our Lord on the widow's son of Naim. Such was the resurrection of Lazarus, whose circumstances you all remember so well. Such was the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. Such were the resurrections of many men and women effected by our Lord and His apostles and the saints of the Old and the New Testament. These were all true and valid resurrections, it is true, and they were accomplished, and could be accomplished, only by the outstretched arm of God. But, alas, the widow's son of Naim died again; and Lazarus died again; and the widow's son of Serepta died again; and the daughter of Jairus died again; and Tabitha died again; and all those raised from the dead through the prayers of the saints of every age sank again into the grave, and all at last were made to submit to that inexorable sentence pronounced by an outraged God for sin: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread all the days of thy life, till thou return to the earth of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return."

Ah, how many are there here to-day, perhaps, who have risen, with the help of God, from a career of sin, and who at this moment feel within them the lusty life of grace; but who will again, through human frailty, through neglect of prayer, through the strength of their own sinful passions and bad habits; above all, through their imprudently thrusting themselves into the occasion of sin, fall again into a state of spiritual death, never again, perhaps, to be awakened to a life of grace by the quickening voice of God; but to be abandoned to eternal reprobation. These are the abortions of the Church's spiritual life and the victims of their own insane folly.

THE PERFECT SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION

But give me a spiritual uprisal, modeled truly on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Give me a spiritual life analogous to His during the Easter days. Give me a resurrection, I say, modelled on that of Jesus Christ, and an after-life like to His, of whom the Gospel tells us that to show that He was truly

risen from the dead He performed the functions of a living man by daily conversing with the disciples, by eating with them, and by the performance of other vital actions. So you, I say, show forth to the world that your resurrection to the spiritual life is one effected by the help of grace and destined to be perpetual, by speaking, aye, thundering in the ears of God the voice of prayer and of contrition for your past sins; by eating, yes, sharing in the ineffable banquet of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ by frequent Communion, and by doing the works of Christ; that is, by the practice of Christian virtues. Give me such a resurrection and such a subsequent life. Of such a one it can be said what was said of Jesus Christ—that being risen from the dead "He dieth no more; death hath no longer dominion over Him"; for the supernatural life begun here by grace is destined to be perfected hereafter in glory.

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LOW SUNDAY

SUBJECT

CONTRITION

TEXT

Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained.—John xx. 23.

Analysis

Introduction. The words of the text were spoken by our Lord on the evening of the day of the Resurrection. The risen Saviour, appearing to the Apostolic group as they were gathered together behind closed doors, conferred upon them the wondrous power of forgiving and retaining sins. He gave them the faculty, not only to forgive, but also to retain sins, thereby showing that this power was to be exercised with discrimination, dependent upon the dispositions of the sinner. Accordingly the minister of Christ in the Sacrament of Penance is not allowed to give absolution, unless he judges there is contrition on the part of the penitent; and were he to absolve a sinner who had no sorrow for his sins, the absolution would be null and void. Let us meditate, therefore, to-day on contrition for sins, a most necessary condition for pardon.

I. **The meaning of contrition.** 1. Contrition is a sorrow and detestation of past sin, with a purpose of sinning no more. It does not mean, then, merely the beginning of a new life, without sorrow for the past; nor, on the other hand, does it involve a sensible feeling of sorrow, but only an act of the will. 2. Contrition includes two elements: (a) sorrow for the past; (b) a firm resolution of amendment for the future. Hence contrition requires forgiveness of injuries and the purpose of reparation and restitution, as far as necessary and possible, and of the avoidance of the occasions of sin. 3. Contrition is either perfect or imperfect (attrition) according as our sorrow springs

from love of God; or from fear of punishment, hatred of sin, or other supernatural motive short of God's love. If one's dispositions are such that he would continue to sin except for the fear of punishment, his contrition is not sufficient for pardon.

II. The qualities of contrition. 1. Contrition must be *interior, i.e.,* it must come from the heart. 2. It must be *supernatural, i.e.,* its motive must spring from something suggested by faith, such as love of God, loss of heaven, and the like; it must not be a merely natural sorrow based on fear of temporal loss or punishment. 3. It must be *universal,* extending at least to all mortal sins. If only venial sins are confessed, sorrow must be had at least for one of them. 4. Contrition must be *sovereign, i.e.,* the penitent, aside altogether from his sensible feelings, must realize that sin, as being against God, is the greatest of all evils.

III. The importance and efficacy of contrition. 1. An act of perfect contrition obtains pardon for sins at once, even before they are confessed, because it proceeds from love of God, which cannot co-exist with sin. 2. Perfect contrition, however, when there is question of mortal sins, must include the intention of confession, since Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance as the sole means (at least in desire) of forgiving grievous sins committed after Baptism.

EXHORTATION. 1. Make frequent examinations of conscience and acts of contrition, especially before going to sleep. 2. Frequently reflect on the motives of sorrow for sin. 3. Make a sincere act of contrition before going to confession, and remember that true contrition always requires a firm purpose of amendment.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

Contrition

THE MEANING OF CONTRITION

As the faithful require instruction on the nature and efficacy of the parts of Penance, we shall begin with contrition. This subject demands careful explanation; for as often as we call to mind our past transgressions, or offend God anew, so often should our hearts be pierced with contrition. By the Fathers of the Council of Trent, contrition is defined: "A sorrow and detestation of past sin, with a purpose of sinning no more."[1] And a little further on the Council, speaking of the motion of the will to contrition, adds: "If joined with a confidence in the mercy of God and an earnest desire of performing whatever is necessary to the proper reception of the Sacrament, it thus prepares us for the remission of sin."

From this definition, therefore, the faithful will perceive that the efficacy of contrition does not simply consist in ceasing to sin, or in resolving to begin, or having actually begun a new life; it supposes first of all a hatred of one's ill-spent life and a desire of atoning for past transgressions. This the cries of the holy Fathers which are poured out in the pages of Holy Writ, sufficiently prove:[2] "I have labored in my groaning," says David, "every night I will wash my bed"; and again, "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping."[3] "I will recount to thee all my years," says the prophet Isaias, "in the bitterness of my soul."[4] These and many other like expressions were called forth by an intense hatred and a lively detestation of past transgressions.

WHY CONTRITION IS CALLED SORROW

But although contrition is defined as "sorrow," the faithful are not thence to conclude that this sorrow consists in sensible

[1] Sess. 14.
[2] See de pœnit. dist. 1. c. et venit; ibid. dist. c. totam.
[3] Ps. vi. 7–9.
[4] Isa. xxxviii. 15.

feeling; for contrition is an act of the will, and as St. Augustine observes, sorrow is not penance but the accompaniment of penance.[5] By "sorrow" the Fathers understood a hatred and detestation of sin; in the first place, because the Sacred Scriptures frequently use the word in this sense: "How long," says David, "shall I take counsels in my soul, sorrow in my heart all the day?"[6] and secondly, because from contrition arises sorrow in the inferior part of the soul which is called the seat of concupiscence. With propriety, therefore, is contrition defined a "sorrow," because it produces sorrow, a sorrow so intense that formerly penitents, in order to express its intensity, used to change their garments. Our Lord alludes to this custom when He says: "Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida; for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in you, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes."[7]

WHY THIS PART OF PENANCE IS CALLED CONTRITION

To signify the intensity of this sorrow the name "contrition" has rightly been given to the detestation of sin of which we speak. The word, literally understood, means the breaking of an object into small parts by means of a stone or some harder substance, and here it is used metaphorically, to signify that our hearts, hardened by pride, are subdued and reduced by penance. Hence no other sorrow, not even that which is felt for the death of parents, or children, or for any other visitation however calamitous, is called contrition. The word is exclusively employed to express the sorrow with which we are overwhelmed by the forfeiture of the grace of God and of our own innocence.

OTHER NAMES FOR CONTRITION

Contrition, however, is often designated by other names. Sometimes it is called "contrition of heart," because the word "heart" is frequently used in Scripture to express the will; for as the movement of the body originates in the heart, so, the

[5] Homil. 50. [6] Ps. xii. 2. [7] Matt. xi. 21.

will is the faculty which governs and controls the other powers of the soul. By the holy Fathers it is also called "compunction of heart," and hence they preferred to entitle their works on contrition treatises on "compunction of heart";[8] for as ulcers are lanced with a knife in order to allow the escape of the poisonous matter accumulated within, so the heart, as it were, is pierced with the lance of contrition, to enable it to emit the deadly poison of sin. Hence, contrition is called by the Prophet Joel, a "rending of the heart": "Be converted to me," he says, "with all your hearts in fasting, in weeping, in mourning, and rend your hearts."[9]

SORROW FOR SIN SHOULD BE SUPREME

That the sorrow for past sins should be so profound and supreme that no greater sorrow could be thought of will easily appear from the considerations that follow.

Perfect contrition is an act of charity, emanating from what is called filial fear; hence it is clear that the measure of contrition and charity should be the same. Since, therefore, the charity which we cherish towards God,[10] is the most perfect love, it follows that contrition should be the keenest sorrow of the soul. God is to be loved above all things, and whatever separates us from God is therefore to be hated above all things. It is also worthy of note that to charity and contrition the language of Scripture assigns the same extent. Of charity it is said: "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy *whole* heart";[11] of contrition the Lord says through the Prophet: "Be converted with thy *whole* heart."[12]

Secondly, since it is true, that of all objects which deserve our love, God is the supreme good, and not less true, that of all objects which deserve our execration sin is the supreme evil, the same reason which prompts us to confess that God is to be loved above all things, obliges us also of necessity to acknowledge that sin is to be hated above all things. That God is to be loved above all things, so that we should be prepared to sacri-

[8] Chrysost., de compunct. cordis; Isidor., de summo bono, lib. 2. c. 12.
[9] Joel ii. 12.
[10] 1 John iv. 7.
[11] Deut. vi. 5.
[12] Joel ii. 12.

fice our lives rather than offend Him, these words of the Lord clearly declare: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me," [13] "He that will save his life shall lose it.[14]

Further, it should be noted that since, as St. Bernard says, there is no limit or measure to charity, or to use his own words, as "the measure of loving God is to love Him without measure," [15] there should be no limit to the hatred of sin.

Besides, our contrition should be not only the greatest but also the most intense and so perfect that it excludes all apathy and indifference; for it is written in Deuteronomy: "When thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him: yet so if thou seek him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul"; [16] and in the prophecy of Jeremias: "Thou shalt seek me and shalt find me, when thou shalt seek me with all thy heart; and I will be found by thee, saith the Lord." [17]

If, however, our contrition be not perfect, it may nevertheless be true and efficacious. For as things which fall under the senses frequently touch the heart more sensibly than things purely spiritual, it sometimes happens that persons feel more intense sorrow for the death of their children than for the grievousness of their sins.

Our contrition may also be true and efficacious, although unaccompanied with tears, though penitential tears are much to be desired and commended. On this subject St. Augustine has well said: "The spirit of Christian charity lives not within you, if you lament the body from which the soul has departed, but lament not the soul from which God has departed." [18] To the same effect are the words of the Redeemer above cited: "Woe to thee, Corozain, woe to thee, Bethsaida; for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, they had long since done penance, in sackcloth and ashes." [19] To establish this truth it will suffice to recall the well-known examples of the Ninivites,[20] of David,[21]

[13] Matt. x. 37. [14] Matt. xvi. 25. Mark vii. 35.
[15] Lib. de diligendo Deo, about the middle.
[16] Deut. iv. 29. [17] Jer. xxix. 13. [18] Ser. 41. de sanctis.
[19] Matt. xi. 21. [20] Jonas iii. 6. [21] Ps. 6 and 50.

of the woman caught in adultery,[22] and of the Prince of the Apostles,[23] all of whom obtained the pardon of their sins when they implored the mercy of God with abundant tears.

CONTRITION SHOULD EXTEND TO ALL MORTAL SINS

The faithful should be earnestly exhorted and admonished to strive to extend their contrition to each mortal sin into which they may have had the misfortune to fall. For it is thus that Ezechias describes contrition: "I will recount to thee all my years in the bitterness of my soul";[24] for to recount all our years is to examine our sins one by one in order to have sorrow for them all from our hearts. In Ezechiel also we read: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins, he shall live."[25] In this sense St. Augustine says: "Let the sinner consider the quality of his sins, as to time, place, variety and person."[26]

In the work of conversion, however, the sinner should not despair of the infinite goodness and mercy of God. For since God is most desirous of our salvation, He will not delay to pardon us. With a father's fondness, He embraces the sinner the moment he enters into himself, turns to the Lord, and having detested all his sins, resolves that later on, as far as he is able, he will call them singly to mind and detest them. The Almighty Himself, by the mouth of His prophet, commands us to hope, when He says: "The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness."[27]

From what has been said we may gather the chief requisites of true contrition. In these the faithful are to be accurately instructed, that each may know the means of attaining, and may have a fixed standard by which to determine how far he may be removed from the perfection of this virtue.

THE QUALITIES OF TRUE CONTRITION

We must, then, in the first place, detest and deplore all our sins. If our sorrow and detestation extend only to some sins,

[22] Luke vii. 37, 48, 51.
[23] Luke xxii. 62.
[24] Isa. xxxviii. 15.
[25] Ezech. xviii. 21.
[26] Lib. de vera et falsa relig. cap. 14.
[27] Ezech. xxxiii. 12.

our repentance is not sincere or salutary, but feigned and false. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law," says St. James, "but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." [28]

In the next place, our contrition must be accompanied with a desire of confessing and satisfying for our sins. Concerning these dispositions we shall treat in their proper place.

Thirdly, the penitent must form a fixed and firm purpose of amendment of life. This the prophet clearly teaches in the following words: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die: I will not remember all his iniquities which he hath done"; and a little after: "When the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness which he hath wrought and doth judgment and justice, he shall save his soul alive"; still further on he adds: "Be converted, and do penance for all your iniquities, and iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed and make yourselves a new heart." [29] To the woman taken in adultery the Redeemer Himself imparts the same lesson of instruction: "Go thy way, and sin no more"; [30] and also to the lame man whom He cured at the pool of Bethsaida: "Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more." [31]

That a sorrow for sin and a firm purpose of avoiding sin for the future are two conditions indispensable to contrition nature and reason clearly show. He who would be reconciled to a friend must regret to have injured or offended him, and his future conduct must be such that the same offence be not repeated. Furthermore, these are conditions to which man is bound to yield obedience; for the law to which man is subject, be it natural, divine, or human, he is bound to obey. If, therefore, by force or fraud, the penitent has injured his neighbor in his property, he is bound to restitution. If by word or deed he has injured his neighbor's honor or reputation, he is under an obligation of repairing the injury by procuring him some advantage or rendering him some service. Well known to all

[28] James ii. 10.
[29] Ezech. xviii. 21, 22.
[30] John viii. 11.
[31] John v. 14.

is the maxim of St. Augustine: "The sin is not forgiven unless what has been taken away is restored." [32]

Again, it is not less necessary for true contrition that it be accompanied by entire forgiveness of the injuries which we may have received from others. This our Lord emphatically declares and energetically inculcates, when He says: "If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences; but if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences." [33]

These are the conditions which true contrition requires and which the faithful will observe. There are other dispositions which, although not essential to true and salutary penance, contribute to render contrition more perfect and complete in its kind, and which the pastor will readily discover.

THE EFFECTS OF CONTRITION

Simply to make known the truths of salvation should not be deemed a full discharge of the duty of the pastor; his zeal should be exerted to persuade the people to adopt these truths as their rule of conduct through life, and as the governing principle of their actions. Hence it will be highly useful often to explain the power and utility of contrition. For whereas most other pious works, such as alms, fasting, prayer, and the like, in themselves holy and commendable, are sometimes, through human infirmity, rejected by God; contrition can never be other than pleasing and acceptable to Him. "A contrite and humble heart, O God!" exclaims the prophet, "thou wilt not despise." [34] Nay more, the same prophet declares elsewhere that, as soon as we have conceived this contrition in our hearts, our sins are forgiven by God: "I said, I will confess my injustice to the Lord, and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin." [35] Of this truth we have a figure in the ten lepers, who, when sent by our Lord to the priests, were cured of their leprosy before they had reached them; [36] which gives us to understand that such is the efficacy of true contrition, of which

[32] Epist. v. 4. [33] Matt. vi. 14. [34] Ps. l. 19.
[35] Ps. xxxi. 5. [36] Luke xvii. 14.

we have spoken above, that through it we obtain from God the immediate pardon of all sins.

MEANS OF AROUSING TRUE CONTRITION

To move the faithful to contrition, it will be very useful if the pastor point out some method by which each one may excite himself to contrition. This is to be accomplished by admonishing them, frequently to examine their consciences, in order to ascertain if they have been faithful in the observance of those things which God and His Church require. Should anyone be conscious of sin, he should immediately accuse himself, humbly solicit pardon from God, and implore time to confess and satisfy for his sins. Above all, let him supplicate the aid of divine grace, by which he may be strengthened against a relapse into those sins, which he now penitently deplores.

The faithful are also to be excited to a supreme hatred of sin, both because its turpitude and baseness are very great and because it brings us the gravest losses and misfortunes. For sin deprives us of the friendship of God, to whom we are indebted for so many invaluable blessings, and from whom we might have expected and received gifts of still higher value; and along with this it consigns us to eternal death and the most excruciating torments.

Sermon

CONTRITION

BY THE REV. THOMAS WHITE

NECESSITY OF CONTRITION

Equally important with confession is contrition; without which every compliance with external ceremonies, forms, and practices, is perfectly nugatory, and must tend rather to increase, than to obliterate the guilt of the sinner. Without contrition, which is a sorrow of the heart for sin committed with a firm purpose to sin no more for the future (*animi dolor de peccato commisso cum*

proposito non peccandi de cetero), the confession of sin is either a mockery, or an act of hypocrisy, insulting to the God of mercy, injurious to ourselves. This sorrow is the principal and essential ingredient of true repentance: without it no humiliation will be effectual to the remission of sin; yet such is its efficacy, that in circumstances where confession to a priest is not practicable, it is sufficient to obtain the forgiveness of God and reconcile the sinner. Let us then, my friends, consider attentively, for much it imports us to consider the nature of contrition, and the motives on which it ought to be formed.

CONTRITION MUST BE INTERIOR

First. Contrition, in order to be efficacious in appeasing the wrath of God, and reconciling the sinner, must be "interior": that is, it must have possession of the heart. "Be converted to me," says the Lord, by His prophet (Joel ii. 12), "with all your hearts:—rend your hearts, and not your garments." No; He who has been offended, sees into the deepest recesses of the interior, nor will He be imposed upon, by the assumed appearance of grief, without the reality. Mere professions of the lips, mere external gestures, an humble posture of the body, will not deceive the great Searcher of hearts, the Judge of all mankind, the Avenger of guilt. In vain shall the tear flow, the sigh and the groan be heaved, if the heart be not pierced with affliction for the outrage that it has consented to offer to its God. Though you should for hours be stretched out in prostration upon the naked earth, though you should smite your breasts and tear your hair, and rend your garments, the offended Deity will despise your outward homage, the show of repentance, if your hearts be not rent in sorrow for your ingratitude. "Sacrifice and oblation he does not desire," the offerings of your hands He disregards, "with holocausts he will not be delighted." The sacrifice pleasing to Him is "an afflicted spirit," the "contrite and humble heart, O God, thou will not despise" (Ps. l. 17).

The external display of grief and devotion may be, and has been, assumed by hypocrites. When true contrition pervades the soul, all the affections of the heart, which had been turned

from God to sin, will be restored to Him: the soul will lament its separation from the source of all its good, will bewail its own state of wretchedness and dereliction, and even more than its own misfortune will grieve that the author of all sanctity, the God of all purity, and loveliness, and beauty, and perfection, has been offended—basely, ungratefully offended—by His creature, the work of His hands, the object of His regard and affection. Were such our sorrow, my friends, when we approach the sacred tribunal, should we in a few days present the same characters to the view of men and angels? Should we return so soon to those very crimes which we protested we abhorred and renounced forever? Ah! in other cases hatred is not so soon removed, even when we are required by duty, and declare that we are using our utmost endeavors to subdue it. Certainly those persons willingly deceive themselves, who, in confessing their sins, wait not till, by the grace of God, their souls are penetrated by this lively and heartrending compunction, but satisfy themselves with reciting certain forms of prayer in their manuals, conceiving that when this is performed, and a certain portion of time, which they observe to be allotted to preparation by others, of their condition and acquaintance, is given to the recital of these particular prayers, all is done, the work of self-preparation is completed, that they may now go and accuse themselves of some habitual transgressions, as they have often done before, return from the tribunal of mercy, recite a short prayer after confession, as they find it in their prayer book, close the book and retire; no more troubling themselves about their sins, which are henceforth forgotten, and to be replaced by similar offenses, to be confessed in a similar manner. Good God! is it to such as these that thou hast promised mercy? and shall thy Blood, which flowed with so much pain from thy sacred Body, obtain forgiveness on earth and everlasting happiness in heaven for these easy penitents. Oh, no; it is by the malice of the heart that sin is perpetuated, and it is in the heart that repentance must be found: the heart must be changed, or sin will not be forgiven.

CONTRITION MUST BE SUPERNATURAL

Secondly. Another essential quality in contrition is, that it be "supernatural." We have turned from God by our own malice and contempt of His graces, but we cannot return to Him of ourselves; our conversion must be the effect of His grace. If of ourselves we are incapable of one good thought, how shall we be capable, of "ourselves," to detest and abhor sin, to extricate ourselves from the fetters, which the enemy of our souls has thrown around us, from the servitude to which we have submitted by yielding to His suggestions? Some are inclined to imagine that contrition is easily obtained; that in a moment we can turn to God, and insure His forgiveness, by merely telling Him that we expect it: consequently that the sinner can at any time effect his peace with God, just at his own option and inclination. Under this delusive but dangerous error, the enormity of sin is overlooked, the certainty of death is forgotten, the dreadful punishments reserved for sin are disregarded, and many are seen to defer their repentance, professing at the same time an intention to repent, but at some future period, when sin shall lose its attraction, and repentance becomes more suitable to their convenience. But, my friends, without the aid of heaven, never will you be able to renounce sin, never will you be more disposed to detest it. Bending under a weight of years, confined to your chair or to your bed, prevented by the debility of age from the actual commission of many sins, still will your heart be wedded to iniquity, your affections will cling to sinful enjoyments, and your mind dwell on imaginary gratifications, which can never more be realized. Without the grace of God never can man be converted from vice to virtue; without the previous aid and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for him to elicit an act of contrition, grounded on motives which will appease the divine justice, and obtain the remission of sin. Human grief may be felt in the soul, motives of mere self-interest may make the sinner wish that he had not offended God, and by his crimes drawn down upon his own head the anger of the Most High, and the imminent effects of that anger; but unless the

Almighty pierce his heart, though like Antiochus he shed abundance of tears, he sorrows for himself, not for his sins, he laments not that he has offended God, but worked his own wo. The concern which is sometimes felt and taken for contrition, is nothing more than the working of self-love, a fear arising from the necessity of acknowledging sin, of exposing the wounds of the soul, the filth of an impure heart; and this apprehension, so far from being true contrition for sin, diminishes in proportion as contrition penetrates the soul.

Supernatural sorrow makes the penitent view, without concern, the mere human inconveniences which attend upon repentance, and a change of life: whereas this dread, which alarms and agitates them, makes them consider the salutary institution of confession as the greatest evil, and keeps many at a distance from the Sacrament of Penance, while some, torn by the remorse of guilt, approach to the tribunal, and take this confusion for that sorrow, which atones for iniquity, this aversion for confession for aversion for sin. They imagine themselves to be sincere penitents, and expect the reward of a contrite and humble heart, while they are suffering only the torments inflicted by their own pride, and the consequences of a confusion which is pride's genuine offspring.

It is indeed true that "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cx. 9), but that fear is widely different from the fear which is here spoken of. There is a "shame," too, "that bringeth glory and grace" (Eccl. iv. 25), but it is quite of another character and nature from that which is experienced by these persons. This shame is regardless of the opinion of men, it is a shame at having offended the Almighty; the Father, the friend, the protector of His creatures. It is a shame that would be felt in irresistible blushes, far from the view of men, in deepest solitude, or in the center of the earth. That God beholds his guilt, is the confusion and misery of the true penitent, not that it is seen by human eye, or heard by the ear of man. This shame, and its concomitant sorrow must be the gift of God, earnestly implored and fervently desired.

CONTRITION MUST BE SOVEREIGN

Thirdly. Contrition must also be a "sovereign" sorrow: it must be such as to detest sin above all evils; to love God so as to prefer the loss of every good to the loss of Him, who is the sovereign good. How many are there who would be happy (were the thing possible) to join the commission of sin with the salvation of their souls, regardless of their displeasing God! and how many actually endeavor to unite the gratification of every appetite and desire, with the hope of possessing God for eternity; or, to speak more properly, endeavor to enjoy every satisfaction on earth, and hope to do the same in heaven! for in their contemplation of the joys of heaven, they dwell not on the delights of divine love, possessing in full fruition that unbounded beauty and excellence, which can satisfy every desire of the enamored soul. Many approach to the Sacrament of Penance, not detesting sin above all things, but with a reluctance, rather serving to prove that they love sin above everything else: so unwilling are they to tear themselves from it, even for a time. For, it is much to be feared, they do not, at the moment, even indulge a hope that they have so forsaken sin, as to have abandoned it forever. Ah! my Christian friends, were our sorrow for sin superior to every other sorrow, were our hatred for it above every other dislike and abhorrence, should we not show signs of our antipathy and aversion, since in other cases we find it so difficult to conceal or disguise them?

CONTRITION MUST BE UNIVERSAL

Fourthly. It is requisite that contrition be "universal"; that is, it must be extended to every mortal sin: for that person can never be truly grieved, for having offended God, who is not grieved for every act or word, thought or omission, which has given God displeasure. It will not be sufficient to renounce what the heart is not inclined to; the temptation may be over, and be felt no more; no difficulty will, of course, be experienced, in renouncing that which the heart no longer affects, or that which may possibly have produced worldly

loss, or terrestrial inconvenience; but this is not to grieve for having yielded to temptation, when it was gratefully embraced, this is not to grieve with a sorrow proceeding from God. The love of God enters into, refines, and exalts true contrition, purifying it from the dross of interested self-love, and extending it to all, that is displeasing in the sight of an offended Deity.

CONCLUSION

My brethren, it is necessary to describe to you the form and character of genuine contrition, not merely to vindicate the doctrine of the Catholic Church, by showing that, for the remission of sin in the Sacrament of Penance, she deems it necessary that the heart be changed, and sin repudiated by an eternal divorce, but also that you may not be deceived by mistaking the shadow of contrition for the substance. I know that the seat of grief, as of all the passions, is the heart, and that it does not consist in external demonstrations. But still you may judge of your sorrow by its effects; and in mere human calamities your sorrow is neither still nor silent. In these you are not indifferent, and the exterior in unison with the interior bespeaks the affliction under which the soul labors. In losses, or other earthly misfortunes, how are the spirits depressed, how is the mind agitated; then does the tear, the sigh, the groan, the countenance, the whole exterior prove the sincerity of that grief, which rends the heart. You are sometimes moved by sorrows that are not your own, the tale of deep distress excites the most powerful sympathies: if then you can be moved by the calamities of others, surely you will not be insensible to your own.

It is for want of knowing and feeling the nature and extent of spiritual evils, which knowledge must be inspired by God, and will be communicated by Him to those who seek the wisdom of God and are brought to a true knowledge of themselves by mental prayer—it is for want of this knowledge and this feeling that we are unmoved at the view of our treasons against God, indifferent to His displeasure, and if affected in a slight degree at the thought of eternal torments, this is only from

a mere corporeal feeling, from a dread of material suffering, not from a love of God, or a horror at the thought of losing the object of our affections, the source of all that is good, and of being separated from our God forever. Since it is by the grace of God alone that you can obtain a supernatural, sovereign, universal sorrow, for your sins, a true contrition, earnestly beseech Him to bestow upon you this His gift; without it, you confess in vain, your sins will still be upon you, and you will remain a child of wrath, an object of detestation in the sight of God. Let not this be petitioned for, barely,when you are intending to approach the Sacrament of Penance, but at all times, that your sorrow for sin may be ever on the increase, that the Lord will improve and supply any past deficiencies in approaching the heavenly institution, that He will "wash you still more from your iniquity, and cleanse you from your sin," and that moved by your sorrow for your ingratitude, He will show you mercy, who has declared that "a contrite and humble heart he will not despise" (Ps. l.).

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

SUBJECT

DUTIES OF THE FAITHFUL TO THEIR PASTORS

TEXT

I am the good shepherd; I know mine, and mine know me.—JOHN X. 14.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. Our Lord tells us in to-day's Gospel that He is the good shepherd, the good shepherd of our souls. He provides for us, He watches over our lives, protecting us against danger, assisting us by His grace, and leading us out to the green pastures of His heavenly doctrine and Sacraments.

Thus our Lord is the model of the true pastor of souls. Like Christ, the pastor should know his sheep, should lead them by his good example, should nourish them by the heavenly doctrine of the Church, and defend them from the dangers of error, scandal, and sin. But if these are the duties of the pastor, it follows that the faithful have the corresponding duties of being docile, obedient and loyal to all the pastor's words and directions, and of co-operating with all his efforts for the welfare of their souls.

I. The dignity of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. 1. This Sacrament confers the powers of Orders, that is, a power over the *real* Body of Christ, which is exercised in consecrating the Holy Eucharist and in preparing the faithful for its reception by forgiving their sins. 2. The singular greatness of the power of Orders is seen, (a) by comparing it with miraculous power, like that of Moses, who commanded the sea, like that of Josue, who commanded the sun, or with the power of generals, who command their armies; the priest is able, by divine power, to command the son of God Himself; (b) by comparing it with the priesthood of the law of nature and of the Mosaic Law.

II. The authority of the Christian priesthood. 1. The Sacrament of Orders disposes the recipient for the power of jurisdiction, that is, a power over the *mystical* body of Christ, which consists in teaching and ruling the faithful in the way of salvation. 2. The force of this power of jurisdiction is seen in the fact that it was conferred on the Church and her ministers by Christ Himself, who said: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (John xx. 21); "going therefore teach ye all nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19); "he that receiveth you receiveth me" (Matt. x. 40); etc.

III. The devotion of the priest to his flock. 1. The priest gives up his life for the people, he spends long years in labor acquiring his education, he denies himself many comforts and pleasures, he imperils his life, when need be, for the welfare of his flock. 2. For the sake of his ministry the priest foregoes the gains that would come to him from temporal pursuits.

Conclusion. From the dignity, powers and devotion of the priesthood follow the duties of the faithful: 1. To the dignity of the priest honor is due. 2. To his authority is owed obedience. 3. For his service and devotion the faithful are obliged in justice to contribute according to their means to his temporal support. This is a Commandment of God and the fifth precept of the Church. 4. The faithful should pray for and foster vocations to the priesthood.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Fourth Commandment

Others besides parents whom this commandment requires us to honor

We are bound to honor not only our natural parents, but also those who are entitled to be called fathers, such as Bishops and priests, kings, princes, and magistrates, tutors, guardians and masters, teachers, aged persons, and the like, all of whom are entitled, some in a greater, some in a less degree, to share our love, our obedience, our assistance.

THE HONOR DUE TO BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

Of Bishops and other pastors St. Paul says: "Let the priests that rule well be esteemed worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." [1] What proofs of ardent love for the Apostle the Galatians must have given may be inferred from the illustrious testimony in which he has recorded their benevolence. "I bear you witness," he says, "that if it could be done, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and would have given them to me." [2] The priest is also entitled to receive whatever is necessary for his support. "Who," says St. Paul, "serveth as a soldier at his own charges"? [3] "Give honour to the priests," says Ecclesiasticus, "and purify thyself with thy arms; give them their portion, as it is commanded thee, of the first fruits and of purifications." [4]

The Apostle also teaches that they are entitled to obedience: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them; for they watch as being to render an account of your souls." [5] Nay, more, Christ Himself commands obedience even to wicked pastors: "Upon the chair of Moses have sitten the Scribes and Pharisees: all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not, for they say and do not." [6]

Sermon

Support the Church and Her Institutions

BY THE REV. THOMAS J. GERRARD

Even so did the Lord ordain that they which proclaim the Gospel should live by the Gospel.—1 Cor. ix. 14.

INTRODUCTION

The very nature of the Church and of the sacramental system demands that men and not angels should be the ministers

[1] 1 Tim. v. 17. See Ambr. on this text.
[2] Gal. iv. 15. [3] 1 Cor. ix. 7.
[4] Eccli. vii. 33. On paying tithes see C. of Orleans I, c. 17; C. of Mâcon II, c. 5; C. of Friuli, last chap.; C. of Later., c. 53; C. of Trent, sess. 25, c. 13; c. 16, q. 1, 7; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 81.
[5] Hebr. xiii. 17. [6] Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.

of the mysteries of God. Religion being the tie which binds man to God, it must be suited to the whole man, to body as well as to spirit; to the body for the sake of the spirit; for it is through the instrumentality of the body that the spirit must make itself active in the things of religion. Doubtless God does choose angels as the ministers of many of His graces. But these are the extraordinary graces. The ordinary graces are conveyed by ordinary channels. The Sacraments are administered by men. The Word of God is preached by men. The holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered by men. But not by all men. The duty of attending to these mysteries is the most important duty upon earth, and so a special class of men is set aside for it in order that it may be efficiently performed. Hence the visible Catholic Church consists of the clergy and of the laity. The clergy are set aside from the world, chosen out from amongst men, in order that they may serve God's interests, in order that they may serve man's highest interests; namely, man's eternal salvation. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins."

SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH IS A DUTY

And being taken from among men the priest is subject to the same necessities as other men. "He himself is compassed with infirmity." He cannot live on the Word of God, but he must live by the Word of God. In addition to fresh air he needs food, clothing, lodging and recreation. He needs these things moreover in a degree befitting his station. His mission is to all classes, to the rich and to the poor, to the educated and to the uneducated. Consequently he must be so equipped as to be able to appear amongst all classes with dignity, and so carry out his ministry with the greatest efficiency possible. On the double title, therefore, of natural law and of divine ordinance there exists the right of the clergy to what is called honorable sustenance.

Notice at the outset that this right of the clergy is a right in the strict sense of the word. The sustenance which is due to them is due to them in strict justice. It is not an alms given

out of charity. In this day of keen competition for a living there are of course plenty of opportunities where the charity of the faithful may come to the help of the clergy. There are many cases in which they may most fittingly receive help to which they have no right in strict justice. But these cases must be clearly marked off from that honorable sustenance which it is the strict duty of the laity to provide. In some countries this right and duty is emphasized by the fact that the funds for clergy sustenance are gathered in the form of taxes by government. In England and America, however, they are gathered in the form of what is known as "a collection." They are gathered in the same way as funds for charitable purposes. The amount is left largely to the judgment of the faithful themselves. Hence the feeling has grown up that the honorable sustenance of the clergy is a charity. This is a feeling which must be dispelled. The obligations of justice are on an entirely different footing from those of charity. The obligations of justice take precedence over the obligations of charity. The obligations of justice bind under grave inconvenience while those of charity do not. The duty, therefore, of subscribing toward the honorable sustenance of the clergy supposes a serious effort in those of limited means. It supposes an effort at least equal to that which is made to satisfy claims which have a more immediate sanction; the claims, for instance, of the landlord and the tradesman.

It is not, however, chiefly amongst those of limited means that this all-important distinction between justice and charity is unknown or neglected. It is chiefly amongst those of more ample means. There are many good or even generous Catholics who will give, but only to the specific objects to which their fancy takes them. They will build an altar; they will put up a stained-glass window; they will give a treat to the choir; but they will not contribute to the general expenses of the mission. It may be that they have some personal dislike for the priest who happens to be in charge; or that they disapprove of certain ways of parochial management; or that they have an over-wrought zeal in other directions. The root of their mistake, however, is that they do not realize the obliga-

tions of justice; and consequently whatever zeal they may have, not being according to knowledge, is dissipated and wasted.

Let this then be taken as a first and elementary principle in the question of supporting the Church and her institutions. Whatever is necessary for the due administration of the Sacraments, the preaching of the word of God, and the offering up of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass must be provided by the faithful as a matter of obligation and strict justice. And the first necessity for these things is the sustentation of the priest. When this obligation has been satisfied then the faithful may direct their charity and their zeal to their more favorite devotions. Then they may give their attention to those thousand and one accessories of Catholic life and worship, all of which are directed to the greater efficiency and dignity of the aforementioned essentials.

TEACHING OF ST. PAUL

St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, lays down the divine law in this matter. He tells them that he has not actually received sustenance from them, but that there is some special reason for this. Yet although he has not availed himself of his right he nevertheless possesses the right. In waiving it, however, he will not create prejudice against his successors, nor will he leave the faithful in ignorance of their plain duty.

First, he proves his right by reason of his apostolic dignity. "Am not I free? Am not I an apostle?" From his general character as an Apostle he has a right to sustenance. He has, however, a further claim on the Corinthians in virtue of his special character as their Apostle. "Are not you my work in the Lord? And if unto others I be not an Apostle, but yet to you I am. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense with them that do examine me is this: Have not we power to eat and to drink." Besides he has seen Christ Jesus our Lord. He, together with Barnabas, has been divinely set aside for a special apostolate. By divine right, therefore, he has claim to a stipend by which to live. Similarly in the Church at the present day, there are general claims on the

faithful and there are local claims on the faithful. First, there is Peter's pence, which goes to the support of the papal household, and other offices which concern the welfare of the whole Church. Then there are the various diocesan needs. Then there are the foreign missions. But the place which claims our first attention is our own mission. Justice, as well as charity, begins at home. The priest who comes to minister to us in our own mission does not come merely because he likes it, or chooses it. He comes because he is sent by the bishop. He comes because he is sent by Christ through the Pope and the bishop. Just, therefore, as St. Paul had a special claim upon the Corinthians, so has the parish priest a special claim on his own flock.

Secondly, St. Paul proves his right from the authority of human custom. In every phase of life the laborer is worthy of his hire. "Who serveth as a soldier at any time at his own charges?" If fighting countries pay their soldiers who give up home to go to battle, why should not also the militant Church care for those who give up all to follow Christ? "Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit of the vineyard?" The vineyard of God is the Church. The Apostles have labored in planting this vineyard. Paul has planted and Apollo has watered. They have been working for God. Therefore, God, through the instrumentality of the people, gives them their honorable sustentation. "Who feedeth the flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" The sheep of God are the faithful of the Church. Therefore, from the faithful of the Church the pastors have a right to proper sustenance.

Thirdly, St. Paul proves his right by divine law. "Speak I these things according to man? Or doth not the law also say these things? For it is written in the law of Moses: Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care of the oxen? Or doth he say this indeed for our sakes?" To tread out the corn is to separate the grain from the chaff. This is the work of the preacher whose work is to discern virtues from vices, to point out what is useful for sanctity and what is vain. "Thus saith the Lord: If thou wilt separate the precious from the vile thou shalt be

as my mouth." Therefore, St. Paul maintains that he should plow in hope, and thrash in hope, in order that he may receive the reward of his labors. If he has sown spiritual things it is not a very great matter if he should reap a few carnal things. They that serve at the altar partake with the altar. So also "did the Lord ordain that they which proclaim the gospel should live by the gospel."

SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH IS NOT SIMONY

In recognizing the point of view of justice, however, great care must be taken not to confuse the idea with simony. The support of the clergy is not a sordid payment for spiritual things. The service of the altar is not something with a price set upon it. Let us consider this point in the subject matter of stipends for Masses. In all countries it is the right of the priest to receive a stipend if he says Mass for a particular intention. The sum paid is fixed either by the bishop of the diocese or by custom. The money paid, however, is not for the spiritual benefits received from the Mass. The gifts of God are freely given and freely received. To attempt to buy or sell the gifts of God is the sin of simony. But since the ordinary channel of certain gifts of God is the priesthood, and since the priesthood is set aside from the world in order that the spiritual gifts may be the more effectually and the more expeditiously dispensed, then the priesthood must be kept in such a way as to be able to fulfil its duties properly. Therefore, when Christ says to His Apostles: "Freely have you received, freely give," His meaning is, "Give without price, but not necessarily without stipend." To put a temporal value on an eternal gift is to offer an insult to God; but to contribute a fair sum to the support of the priesthood is to perform one of the most elementary acts of justice.

Nevertheless, the method of supporting the Church in England and America is a nearer approach to the method of apostolic times than that which obtains in countries where the Church is supported through the taxes. The Apostles ate bread which was freely given to them. They even worked with their own hands and thus earned their daily bread. This

method of living, was, however, always regarded as one of expediency, a method taken up and tolerated on account of the exigencies of time and country. The Church was in its infancy and the multitudes to be converted knew nothing of the vast ecclesiastical organization with which we are familiar. The Apostles, therefore, in deference to the weakness of the flock did not exact their rights—they would not even appear to be preaching for the sake of their own gain. But when such exigencies disappeared, then the Apostles preached their just right to proper sustenance. So it must be remembered now in these days, that if collections are made in such a way as to leave the faithful free to judge for themselves what is a fitting amount to give, the faithful have the obligation of weighing the matter seriously, of calculating not only their own convenience, but also the needs of the Church.

CONCLUSION

Just as in the sphere of spirituality there are degrees of precept and of counsel, so also in the sphere of temporalities. Everyone is bound to keep the Ten Commandments; all are urged to strive for the life of perfection. In the matter of supporting the Church and her institutions there is likewise this difference of obligation. When the necessaries of the Church have been provided for, unlimited fields still remain for the exercise of the generosity of the faithful toward her. No definite rule can be laid down as to the order of the various demands of the Church which are not strictly necessary. The faithful will here have greater freedom in following their own inclinations. The important thing is that they should have some inclinations. It happens frequently that a man so disapproves of this or that institution that he has inclinations left for none. He thinks we should not subscribe to the foreign missions because his first duty is to the home missions. But he cannot help the home missions because he has more than enough to do with his own parish. And, if the truth were known, his bench rent will probably be overdue. Thus excuses are made and the work of the Church suffers all round.

There are ample motives, however, urging us to take a wide

view and to cultivate a generous disposition in our work of helping the Church and her institutions. If we are striving for anything higher than merely escaping hell, our rule of life will be to do that which tends to the greater glory of God. All our actions will be measured by this standard. The work of the Church, however, is especially God's work on earth. The Church is the instrument which God has devised for the salvation of men. Nay, it is the very continuation of His own wonderful incarnation. To minister to the needs of the Church, therefore, is to minister to Christ's mystical body; it is the most direct way of ministering to God Himself. If Christ were on earth, with what generosity should we provide for His ministrations! But the Church exists solely to continue those ministrations, solely to save sinners. There can be no offering, therefore, too good that we can make to the Church in order to enable her the better to carry on her work.

Secondly, we need to make special efforts in these days because the efforts of the enemy are so well organized and persistent. Secularism has summoned to its aid some of the best things that science, art or literature can provide. Theaters, municipal buildings, libraries, museums, technical schools and even railway stations are designed by the best architects. Shall God's house be served with a less worthy service? Poor law schools, reformatories, asylums and infirmaries provided by the state or municipality are fitted with the latest scientific improvements. Shall the few institutions which the Church keeps directly under her control fare worse than these? Oftentimes the call upon Catholics is so great as to make this a necessity. It is well, however, to bear the contrast in mind as a motive for holy emulation in the cause of God's Church.

Lastly, there is the more personal motive of individual gratitude. We can never sufficiently realize the good that is done to us by Holy Mother Church. It is she who first took us into her bosom by the holy rite of Baptism. It is she who has confirmed us against our life-long enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. It is she who feeds us with Christ's sacred body and unlooses us from our sins when we have turned away from God. It is she who keeps up the succession

of the priesthood to offer sacrifice for us and to carry God's Sacraments to us. It is she who protects and sanctifies the marriage tie and ensures that family happiness which is the very foundation of society. And it is she who is ever ready to help and console us in our last hour. When all earthly occupations have no meaning for us, when we are in our last extremity with naught to lean upon and no one to look to, then Holy Church obliges her priests to come to us. She sends them forth from their presbyteries; whether it be day or night; whether they be ill or well; whether we are suffering from infectious disease or not, the only thought of Holy Church is our everlasting welfare. For this she will make any sacrifice whatsoever. The very least, therefore, that we can do in gratitude is the best that we can in meeting her demands upon our material resources.

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

SUBJECT

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: THE SIN OF SCANDAL

TEXT

Having your conversation good among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God in the day of visitation.—1 Peter ii. 12.

Analysis

Introduction. When St. Peter wrote this Epistle a revolt of the Jews against the Roman authority had just broken out, and it was difficult for the Romans to distinguish between their Christian and Jewish subjects. In consequence both the one and the other fell under the frown of Rome and were regarded as evil doers and criminals. St. Peter, therefore, addressed this letter to the Christians of Asia Minor admonishing them to refrain from all lawlessness and disorderly conduct, and to edify their Gentile brethren by their good lives and actions. How well the advice of St. Peter was heeded by his readers we know from the fact that in Asia Minor, as elsewhere, the conversion of the pagan world was due in large measure to the spotless lives and shining examples of the early Christians. Would to God that Catholics nowadays were always as careful to edify, by their good lives and example, those outside the Church!

I. The meaning and kinds of scandal. 1. Scandal is any word, act, or omission which is the occasion of another's committing sin. For scandal it is not necessary: (a) that the thing done be really sinful, so long as it has the appearance of evil; (b) that the person scandalized be good and innocent; (c) that the person scandalized fall into the sin. 2. Scandal is of two kinds: (a) *Direct* when the scandal giver expressly intends to

lead others astray, as when he counsels or commands what is wrong; (b) *indirect* when he does not wish to lead others into sin, but does or says what he knows will be an occasion of sin. Examples of this latter kind of scandal are: Immodest dressing in women who wish merely to conform to fashion, bad language, neglect of religious duties, and other evil examples on the part of parents and superiors.

II. The malice of scandal. 1. Scandal in itself is an exceedingly grave sin, (a) because it is most injurious to our neighbor—the murderer kills the body, the scandal giver kills the soul; (b) because it is one of the most far-reaching of sins, continuing from one person to another, even after the scandal giver is long in his grave, *e.g.,* Martin Luther, Voltaire, and the like; (c) because the scandal giver, doing the work of Satan, undoes the work of Christ. Dreadful, therefore, is the malediction pronounced by our Lord against the scandal giver (Matt. xviii. 6, 7). 2. The gravity of scandal is greater or less, according to three things: (a) the intention—he who intends scandal is naturally more guilty than he who does not; (b) the position of the scandal giver—scandal is greater in those whose position of rank or authority obliges them to edify: (c) the evil which results from it.

Lessons. 1. We are not obliged to abstain from good and necessary duties, because others will maliciously take scandal from our actions; but if persons of good faith out of weakness and ignorance take scandal from our good actions, we should omit the actions, if possible or explain their lawfulness (1 Cor. vi. 12; viii. 9; 1 Thess. v. 22; Matt. xvii. 26). 2. It is sinful to imitate the scandal giver. To preserve ourselves against this we must avoid, (a) all occasions of sin that we can (Matt. xviii. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 33; Rom. xvi. 17); (b) we must remember that we shall be judged not by the actions of others, but by our own actions. 3. Those who have given scandal are obliged to make reparation, (a) by removing the cause of the scandal; (b) by doing their best through good example, advice, or other

means, to correct the evil done; (c) by praying incessantly for the conversion of those they have scandalized.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Quinquagesima Sunday)

Sermon

The Need of Good Example

BY THE REV. THOMAS P. PHELAN, LL.D.

GOD OUR FATHER

God is our Father by creation, by preservation, by redemption. He made us to His own image and likeness, He destined us for eternal glory, He adopted us as His children; "But you have received the Spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry: Abba (Father)" (Rom. viii. 15). We are His children; "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the Sons of God" (1 John i. 1). Our first duty is to God; "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God. This is the greatest and the first commandment" (Matt. xxxiii. 37, 38). Children owe love and obedience to their carnal parents, if they hope for long life; they must love and serve their Heavenly Father, if they desire eternal bliss.

OUR FELLOWMAN IS OUR BROTHER

Our second obligation is to our brethren; "And the second is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxxiii. 39). This law was inscribed on the tablets of the law and is written on man's heart by the finger of God. The Lord made man a social being, with certain duties towards his fellow man; truthfulness in words, justice in action, charity in all things. He commanded him to respect his neighbor's goods and fame, He forbade him to injure his possessions or his reputation. Yet the things of earth are only transitory; the soul is the precious jewel entrusted to man's care. As children

of the Father, we must aid our fellow man to safeguard that priceless inheritance. Every creature is responsible for his own soul, but he must not neglect the salvation of his brother. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. iv. 9) was the response of Cain to the Lord's question. He had taken his brother's bodily life, he had not killed his soul. Yet he was driven into exile with the stigma of murder on his brow. The selfish brother who thinks only of his own soul, is not a true son of God. "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why then doth every one of us despise his brother, violating the covenant of our fathers" (Mal. ii. 10)? The scandalous brother who kills the soul of his brother is not a child of God, but a son of perdition and merits eternal damnation. "It were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 9).

JESUS OUR BROTHER

We are brothers likewise, through the brotherhood of Christ. By the Incarnation He made Himself our Brother. He called Himself, the Son of Man, and styled His disciples His brethren. "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. xii. 50). As His brethren we are heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. "For the spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 16-17). Worldly honors, fleeting triumphs are effaced, we are all members of one, great family, under God as our universal Father. Christ so loved us that He established His Church to guide us and instituted the Sacraments to console us. He shed His Precious Blood that all might obtain eternal life. On Calvary's cross He made the supreme sacrifice, the perfection of fraternal affection. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). To impress on His brethren the sacred obligations they must fulfill, He reduced the law and the prophets to two commandments; to love God, to love fellow man. As He immolated Himself to

save His brothers, from sin and to bring them to eternal glory, so His brethren must aid the weaker members to attain the same reward. They must show good example, bear patiently their frailties, lighten their burdens, encourage them to piety and good works, so that one day, they too, may enjoy the happiness merited for them by Christ, their Brother.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

Christ came to save His brothers from damnation and to lead them to heaven. During the silent years at Nazareth He taught the lessons of humility and obedience, living a simple life in the bosom of a truly Christian family. In His public career, He explained by word of mouth the truths He had taught by example He was the Good Shepherd rescuing the lost sheep, the loving father welcoming the prodigal. His humility, His kindness, His piety, His sacrifice, drew all suffering hearts to Him. A look brought contrition to the soul of Peter; a word consoled the fallen woman; a prayer converted the dying thief. The afflicted, the poor, the reprobate were His dearest friends. He strove by voice and deed to wean the sinner from his evil ways and to restore him to the friendship of the Father. Reproof and criticism were reserved only for the hypocrite and the Pharisee. Even these were not abandoned. A tear of sorrow would blot out their iniquities and restore them to His brotherly affection. He prayed for His betrayer, He forgave His executioners, He loved his enemies. The old Jewish formula: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was superseded by the law of Christian charity. To His Apostles, to His brethren of all ages He gave a new commandment: "That you love one another as I have loved you" (John xv. 12).

THE INFANT CHURCH AN EXAMPLE OF BROTHERLY LOVE

The Apostles went forth to convert a cruel and corrupt world. The oft repeated words of St. John were the keynote of their message: "My children, love one another: this is the precept of our Lord, and if this be done, everything will be

done" (St. Jerome). All nations were groaning beneath the sinful tyranny of Rome. The simplicity of the republic had yielded to the luxury and immorality of the empire. The army, the people, the senate were subservient to a monarch, clothed with divine honors, while ambition, corruption and flattery surrounded the throne. The slave was "not a person but a chattel," with no civil rights, no marriage obligations, no soul. Woman was only an instrument for the lust of a depraved master, marriage merely a passing agreement. The gods were no longer worshiped, philosophy furnished consolation only to the few. The luxury and effeminacy of the East, the crimes and vices of the conquered races, flourished in the hovel and the palace of the Imperial City.

To this orgy of misery and sin, came the poor fishermen, rustic and unlearned, bringing the heavenly message of charity and love. They taught that all men were sons of God and brothers of Christ; they promised eternal happiness as a reward for temporal sorrows; they replaced idolatry with its bloody sacrifices and riotous pageants by a spiritual worship of One God, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient; they restored woman to her true position, as man's spouse and the mother of his children; they rejected the dissolute libertinism of paganism and substituted the austere morality of Christianity. The entire community was united by ties of deep and sweet affection, unknown to the ancient races. Rank, position, race, country, were no obstacles to this brotherly spirit, and patrician and plebeian, bond and free, were brothers in Christ. In their public and private lives, they eschewed all excesses and frivolities, and even refrained from the appearance of evil lest they scandalize the pagan world or their brethren. "It is good not to eat flesh and not to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother is offended or scandalized or made weak" (Rom. xiv. 13-21). The widow and the orphan were succored, the slave urged to obedience, the master exhorted to charity, the sinner encouraged by kindness, the pagan converted by good example. Their edifying lives, their glorious example, astonished and charmed even their persecutors. "They assembled on an appointed day before sunrise, and sang

alternately the praises of Christ as a Divine Being. They bound themselves by oath not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft, and adultery, to fulfill their promises, and not to deny the trust confided to them" (Pliny the Younger to Trajan). The fortitude of the confessor, the purity of the virgin, the heroism of the martyr, were new and striking developments and their example was contagious. Master and slave, rich and poor, philosopher and peasant, became brethren in the household of the Lord. The power of Rome was invoked to destroy this new cult, but Christ was with His Church. His doctrines won all hearts, and the example and piety of His followers aided materially in the spread of Christianity. They drew their inspiration from the words of the Saviour: "So, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds, and glorify your father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16).

MODERN CHRISTIANITY

The Church has never deviated from the teachings of Christ. Throughout the centuries, she has taught His doctrines and by her example has drawn nations and individuals to His fold. Her missionaries have achieved success not alone by preaching, but also by the humility and purity of their lives. "Example," says St. Leo, "is the most telling and persuasive eloquence." "Who does not know that example is more powerful than precept," says St. Augustine. The piety and perseverance of St. Helena converted the mighty Constantine and made him the emancipator of the Church and her staunchest advocate. The prayers and patience of St. Monica, the piety and eloquence of St. Ambrose, made the heretic and libertine, the great Doctor of the Church. The apostolic zeal of an Augustine, a Boniface, a Patrick, enrolled nations and peoples under the banner of Christ. The devotion and abasement of an Aloysius, a Catherine, a Francis de Sales, brought multitudes beneath the sweet yoke of the Redeemer. The labors and trials of an Alphonsus, a Dominic, a Francis, an Ignatius, reclaimed the prodigals who had wandered in strange paths. Even the humble monks and hermits, in their solitude and exile, proclaimed the glory of God and the sweetness of His service.

Among the laity, unknown and unhonored, except in the annals of the recording angel, are legions of true Christians who know the power of good example and by their fervent lives, draw souls to Christ. They are not content to live alone, to wrap themselves in their own virtues, and to save their own souls, they realize their obligation to assist their brethren. They are members of one community, children of one family, unwilling to live in selfish isolation, and burning with zeal for their neighbor's salvation. They may conceal their good works, they may pray and practice penance in secret, yet they are shining lights leading souls to heaven, exercising on saint and sinner alike, a direct, visible, and important influence. As St. Francis and his novice, walking silently through the streets of Rome, preached an eloquent sermon by their modesty and humility, so they who hear the word of God and keep it, attending Mass, receiving the Sacraments, praying fervently, observing the commandments scrupulously, are sowing the seed of the Gospel and drawing souls to Christ, as did the Apostles in primitive years.

HERESY AND SCHISM

"It is not to be expected that the Church should be free from all scandals. She has to do a difficult work with unpromising material. She has to deal, not with the perfect, but with very imperfect man, weak, beset with temptations, struggling painfully from the lower to the higher life" (Bishop Belford). The Lord has warned us of this danger. "For it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). Even in Apostolic days, ambition, ignorance, pride and sensuality inspired men to deny or to corrupt the teachings of Christ and to lead countless souls into error and unbelief. The ambition of an unworthy bishop, the vices of a dissolute emperor led the great Eastern Church, with its wealth of Apostolic tradition, into open and enduring heresy. The irreligious upheaval of the sixteenth century again devastated the Church of Christ. An unscrupulous and immoral monk, a gloomy and fanatical cleric, an adulterous and avaricious king, aided by weak

priests and corrupt nobles, plunged Germany, France and England into despair. Their evil example encouraged other rulers and ecclesiastics until almost all Northern Europe deserted the true Church. Ambition, greed, lust, pride, divided the seamless robe of Christ until to-day, millions of His brethren are living in error and sin, many devoid of faith, degraded by the unholy practices and vices which disgraced pagan Rome. Thus the bad example of the few has led to the spiritual ruin of the many.

INDIVIDUAL SCANDAL

The evil conduct of some Catholics frequently drives weak souls from the true fold, or retards others from embracing the religion of Christ. Scandal, by word, deed, or omission, has sent multitudes of our brothers to perdition. Some wretches, as if inspired by Satan, deliberately tempt their associates to sin. Happily such monsters, allies of the powers of darkness, are few in number. Others by carelessness and indifference, cursing and swearing, immoral words and actions, calumny and detraction, weaken the faith of their co-religionists and repel seekers of truth. Others neglect Mass, prayer and the Sacraments, disregard and disrespect the commandments, disdain and question the advice of God's messengers. Even sincere Christians frequently give scandal by apathy or neglect, forgetful of their obligation to edify their brethren in Christ. Occasionally weak or malicious characters will scent scandal in indifferent acts, or even in the good works of the pious Christian, as did the Pharisees of old in the miracles and doctrines of the Saviour. Such persons usually seek palliation for their own excesses by condemning the sincere worshiper. Yet even to these we must show charity, as Christ did, when He paid the tribute to Caesar, rather than scandalize the hypocrites.

THE MALICE OF SCANDAL

The malice of scandal is enormous. "Now when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, you sin against Christ" (1 Cor. viii. 12). It kills the soul

created by God for Himself; it undoes the merits of Christ on the cross; it endures for ages and is far reaching in its results; it continues to flourish when the body of its author has crumbled into dust. "It is enough to say, that those who give scandal, rob God of a child, and murder a soul for whose salvation He has spent His Blood and His Life" (St. Alphonsus Liguori). The Saviour pronounced dreadful maledictions on the scandalous brother; "But he that shall scandalize one of the little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged around his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6). He is not a child of God nor a brother of Christ, but a son of perdition and a brother of Satan. On the day of reckoning, his malice will be revealed to the whole world; branded like Cain, he will wander throughout all eternity, as a murderer of the souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, his brother.

THE MERCY OF GOD

Yet those who have scandalized their brethren may obtain pardon by penance and sorrow. "For there is one God and one mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a redemption for all, a testimony in due time" (1 Tim. ii. 5-6). Reparation for their evil deeds, good example in public and private, fervent prayers for their former victims, will restore them to God's family. As the tears of Peter brought forgiveness and reward, so contrition will bring pardon to the vilest sinner. For God sent His only Son to suffer and die for all men, and His Precious Blood will wash away every stain from the soul of the sinner and restore him to the friendship of his Heavenly Father.

THE REWARD OF GOOD EXAMPLE

Eternal glory with God, our Father, and Christ, our Brother, is the reward promised to those who lead souls to heaven. "And they that instruct many to justice (shall shine) as stars for all eternity" (Dan. xii. 3). They have kept the commandments, they have followed the precepts of the Master. "So

let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). By their example they have won souls for God. They have shown themselves, true sons of God, true brothers of Christ, and their reward will be eternal bliss, in the mansions of the Father.

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

SUBJECT

PRAYER: ITS NATURE AND FRUITS

TEXT

Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration.—James i. 17.

Analysis

Introduction. In this Epistle St. James the Apostle, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, is drawing the attention of his readers to the vast difference between the gifts that are bestowed by the world and that flow from our corrupt nature, on the one hand, and those that come from God, on the other. The gifts of the former are pride, vanity, concupiscence, and all manner of sins, the consequences of which are death and eternal punishment; whereas the gifts of God are life, grace, virtue, and the like, which lead to eternal happiness. But not all the benefits of God are bestowed upon us naturally and by reason of our creation, but many are dependent upon certain conditions

which are within our power to place or withhold. In many instances it is the will of God that we should honor Him as our Father, as our supreme Lord and Benefactor, by seeking His gifts and the benefits we need through humble prayer and devout supplication. It is important, therefore, that we should consider the nature and necessity, as well as the fruits of prayer.

I. The nature of prayer. 1. Prayer is an elevation of the soul to God, to adore Him, to thank Him, and to ask Him for what we need. 2. Prayer is of two kinds: (a) *mental,* which is made with the mind alone, and is commonly called meditation; (b) *vocal,* which expresses in words the thoughts of the mind and the sentiments of the heart. 3. Prayer is also *private,* or that which is offered by an individual in his own name; and *public,* which is that made by the ministers of the Church in the name of the Church. 4. Prayer has two principal parts: (a) *petition* by which we approach God in order to obtain something from Him; (b) *thanksgiving,* by which we return God thanks for His benefits. 5. Each of these parts of prayer has various degrees, the highest of which is that of those who pray with faith, charity and devotion. The next degree is that of those who, although in sin, pray with faith and with a humble and contrite heart. The third degree of prayer is that of those who have not received the light of faith, but who humbly pray for it. The fourth and last degree of prayer is that of impenitent sinners who ask God to pardon the sins which they are determined not to abandon. The prayers of the first three classes are always heard, but the last class is not heard. 6. Prayer is necessary: (a) because Christ has commanded us to pray; (b) because we owe to God the homage of adoration, petition and thanksgiving, since He is our Supreme Lord and Benefactor; (c) because we are in need of many things for body and soul, which, in the ordinary providence of God, we can obtain only through prayer. These are the reasons why we are bound to pray. We do not pray, as some think, in order

to instruct God regarding our needs, nor to move Him to change His eternal decrees.

II. The fruits of prayer. 1. Prayer is an act of religion by which we honor God. 2. Prayer exercises and increases the virtues, and especially faith, hope and charity; it intensifies fervor, shows our dependence on God, makes us strong against temptation, promotes the love of heavenly things, and disarms the anger of God. 3. Prayer is the key which opens to us the treasure house of divine blessings and heavenly gifts. God is ever ready to hear our prayers, as Holy Scripture proves in so many places. If sometimes we do not obtain the favors we seek, this is either because we ask for what is not conducive to our eternal salvation, or because we do not ask in the proper manner. To those who pray well God always grants either what they ask for, or something better.

Conclusion. 1. Neglect of prayer is a sin, because it is a violation of the command of God, an injustice to the divine majesty, and a loss of the most essential means of salvation. 2. Prayer is a duty which all owe to God and to themselves. It is folly to maintain: (a) that we do not know how to pray, since prayer is only conversation with God; or (b) that we have no time to pray, because we can so often and so easily elevate our thoughts and hearts to God, if only for a moment at a time; or (c) that our prayers are not heard, since a kind Father will never be deaf to the pleadings of His children, if these pleadings are good and properly made. 3. Let us not neglect prayers of thanksgiving.

Catechism of the Council of Trent. Part IV.

Prayer

IMPORTANCE OF THIS SUBJECT

One of the duties of the pastoral office, which is of the highest importance to the spiritual interests of the faithful, is to instruct them on Christian prayer; the nature and efficacy of which must remain unknown to many, if not taught by the pious and faithful

exhortations of the pastor. To this, therefore, should the care of the pastor be directed in a special manner, that his devout hearers may understand how and for what they are to pray.

Whatever is necessary to the performance of the duty of prayer is comprised in that divine formula which Christ our Lord first made known to His Apostles, and through them and their successors to all Christians. The thoughts which it expresses, and the words in which they are conceived, should therefore be so deeply impressed on the mind and memory as to enable us to address this prayer to God promptly and at all times. To assist the pastor, however, in teaching the faithful to pray, we have selected and set down from those writers, who are considered the chief authorities in this matter, whatever appeared to us most instructive on the subject, leaving it to the pastor to draw upon the same sources for further information, should he deem it necessary.[1]

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

In the first place the pastor is to teach the necessity of prayer. Prayer is a duty not only recommended by way of counsel, but also commanded by positive precept. Our Lord Himself has said: "We should pray always." [2] This necessity of prayer the Church declares in the prelude, if we may so call it, which she prefixes to the Lord's prayer: "Admonished by salutary precepts, and taught by divine instruction, we presume to say," etc.

Therefore, since prayer is necessary to the Christian, the Son of God, yielding to the request of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray," [3] gave them a prescribed form of prayer, and encouraged them to hope that the objects of their petitions would be granted. He Himself was to them a model of prayer; He not only prayed assiduously, but watched whole nights in prayer.[4]

The Apostles, also, did not omit to inculcate this duty on their converts. St. Peter,[5] and St. John [6] are incessant in their admonitions to the faithful; and St. Paul, ever mindful of its im-

[1] The following have written on prayer: Tertullian; Cyprian; Aug., ep. III. ad Probam; Chrysost., hom. 15; Cassian., lib. 9. Collat; St. Thomas in opusc. and IIa. IIae., q. 85. in 17 articles.

[2] Luke xviii. 1. [3] Luke xi. 1. [4] Luke vi. 12.

[5] 1 Pet. iii. 7. et iv. 19. [6] 1 John iii. 21, 22.

portance, frequently admonishes us of the salutary necessity of prayer.[7]

Besides, so various are our temporal and spiritual necessities, that we must have recourse to prayer as the best medium for communicating our wants, and the surest means through which to receive whatever we need. For since God owes nothing to anyone, we must ask of Him in prayer those things we need, seeing that He has constituted prayer as a necessary means for the accomplishment of our desires.

Its necessity becomes still more obvious, when we reflect that there are blessings which we cannot hope to obtain otherwise than through prayer. Thus devout prayer has such efficacy that it is a most powerful means of casting out demons; for there is a certain kind of demon which is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.[8]

Those, therefore, who do not practice assiduous and regular prayer deprive themselves of the means of obtaining from God gifts of singular value. To succeed in obtaining the object of your desires, it is not enough that you ask that which is good; your entreaties must also be assiduous. "Every one that asketh," says St. Jerome, "receiveth. If, therefore, it is not given you, this is because you do not ask. Ask, therefore, and you shall receive.[9]

THE FRUITS OF PRAYER

But prayer is not only a necessary, but also a most pleasing exercise of devotion, from which we reap an abundant harvest of spiritual fruit. On these fruits of prayer, the pastor will consult spiritual writers, and, when necessary for the instruction of the faithful, will draw copiously from their works. We have made from these sources a selection which appeared to us to suit the present purpose.

I. PRAYER HONORS GOD

The first fruit which we receive from prayer is that by praying we honor God, since prayer is a certain act of religion, which is

[7] Phil. iv. 6. 1 Thess. v. 17. 1 Tim. ii. 1.
[8] Matt. xvii. 20.
[9] Matt. vii. 8. Luke xi. 10. John xvi. 23, 24. Jerome on Matt. vii. 4.

compared in Scripture to a sweet perfume. "Let my prayer," says David, "be directed as incense in thy sight." [10] By prayer we confess our subjection to God; we acknowledge and proclaim Him to be the author of all good, in whom alone we centre all our hopes, who alone is our refuge, in all dangers and the bulwark of our salvation. Of this fruit of prayer we are admonished, in these words: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." [11]

2. PRAYER OBTAINS WHAT WE REQUEST

Another most pleasing and invaluable fruit of prayer is that it is heard by God. "Prayer is the key of heaven," says St. Augustine; "prayer ascends, and the mercy of God descends. High as are the heavens, and low as is the earth, God hears the voice of man." [12] Such is the utility, such the efficacy of prayer, that through it we obtain plenitude of heavenly gifts. Thus by prayer we secure the guidance and aid of the Holy Spirit, the security and preservation of the faith, deliverance from punishment, protection under temptation, victory over the devil. In a word, there is in prayer an accumulation of spiritual joy; and hence our Lord said: "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." [13]

GOD EVER READY TO HEAR OUR PETITIONS

Nor can we, for a moment, doubt that God in His goodness is at all times ready to hear our petitions—a truth to which the Sacred Scriptures bear ample testimony. Since, however, the texts which go to establish it are easy of access, we shall content ourselves with citing as an example the words of Isaias: "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord will hear: thou shalt cry, and he will say, 'here I am;'" [14] and again, "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will hear: as they are yet speaking, I will hear." [15] With regard to instances of persons, who have obtained from God the objects of their prayers, they are almost innumerable, and too well known to require special mention.

[10] Ps. cxl. 2.
[11] Ps. xlix. 15.
[12] Sent. 226. de temp.
[13] John xvi. 24.
[14] Is. lviii. 9.
[15] Is. lxv. 24.

WHY OUR PRAYERS ARE SOMETIMES UNHEARD

Sometimes, it is true, it happens that what we ask of God we do not obtain. But it is then especially that God looks to our welfare, either because He bestows on us other gifts of higher value and in greater abundance, or because what we ask, far from being necessary or useful, would prove superfluous, or even injurious. "God," says St. Augustine, "denies some things in His mercy, which He grants in His wrath." [16]

Sometimes, also, such is the remissness and negligence with which we pray, that we ourselves do not attend to what we say. Since prayer is an elevation of the soul to God,[17] if, while we pray, the mind, instead of being fixed upon God, is lost in wandering distractions, and the tongue slurs over the words at random, without attention, without devotion, with what propriety can we give to such empty sounds the name of Christian prayer? We should not, therefore, be at all surprised, if God does not comply with our requests; either because by our negligence and indifference we almost show that we do not really desire what we ask, or because we ask those things, which, if granted, would be prejudicial to our eternal interests.

TO DEVOUT PRAYER GOD GRANTS MORE THAN IS ASKED

On the other hand, to those who pray with devout attention, God grants more than we ask. This the Apostle declares in his Epistle to the Ephesians;[18] and the same truth is unfolded in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who would have deemed it a kindness to be admitted into the number of his father's servants.[19] Nay, God heaps His favors not only on those who seek them, but also on those who are rightly disposed; and this, not only with abundance, but also with readiness. This is shown by the words of Scripture: "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor." [20] For God hastens to grant the inner and hidden desires of the needy without waiting their utterance.

[16] Aug. init. serm. 33, de verb. Domini; item in Joan. tract. 73.
[17] On the definition of prayer see Damascen., libr. 3. de fid. orthod. c. 24; Aug., de sermone Domini in monte, c. 7; sermon 280. de tempore.
[18] Ephes. iii. 20. [19] Luke xxv. [20] Ps. x. 17.

3. PRAYER EXERCISES AND INCREASES FAITH

Another fruit of prayer is, that it exercises and augments the Christian virtues, particularly the virtue of faith. As they who have not faith in God, cannot pray as they ought; for, "how can they call on him, whom they have not believed"?[21] so, the faithful, in proportion to the fervor of their prayers, possess a stronger and a more assured faith in the protecting providence of God, which requires principally that, in all needs we have recourse to Him.

4. PRAYER STRENGTHENS OUR HOPE IN GOD

God, it is true, might bestow on us all things abundantly, although we did not ask them or even think of them, just as He bestows on the irrational creation all things necessary for the support of life. But our most bountiful Father wishes to be invoked by His children; He wishes that, praying as we ought each day of our lives, we may pray with increased confidence. He wishes that in obtaining our requests we may more and more bear witness to and declare His goodness towards us.

5. PRAYER INCREASES CHARITY

Our charity is also augmented by prayer. In recognizing God as the author of every blessing and the source of every good, we are led to cling to Him with the most devoted love. And as those who cherish a mutual affection become more ardently attached by frequent interviews and conversations, so the oftener the soul prays devoutly and implores the divine mercy, thus holding converse with God, the more exquisite is the sense of delight which she experiences, and the more ardently is she inflamed to love and adore Him.

6. PRAYER DISPOSES THE SOUL FOR DIVINE BLESSINGS

Furthermore, God wishes us to make use of prayer, in order that burning with the desire of asking what we are anxious to obtain, we may thus make such advances in spiritual life, as to

[21] Rom. x. 14.

be worthy to obtain those blessings which the soul could not obtain before because of its dryness and lack of devotion.[22]

7. PRAYER MAKES US REALIZE OUR OWN NEEDFULNESS

Moreover, God wishes to us realize, and always keep in mind, that, unassisted by His heavenly grace, we can of ourselves do nothing, and should therefore apply ourselves to prayer with all the powers of our souls.

8. PRAYER, A PROTECTION AGAINST THE DEVIL

The weapons which prayer supplies are most powerful against our bitterest foes. "With the cries of our prayers," says St. Hilary, "we must fight against the devil and his armed hosts." [23]

9. PRAYER PROMOTES A VIRTUOUS LIFE

From prayer, we also derive this important advantage that though we are inclined to evil and to the indulgence of passion, as a consequence of our natural frailty, God permits us to raise our hearts to Him, in order that while we address Him in prayer, and endeavor to deserve His gifts, we may be inspired with a love of innocence, and, by effacing our sins, be purified from every stain of guilt.

10. PRAYER DISARMS THE DIVINE VENGEANCE

Finally, as St. Jerome observes, prayer disarms the anger of God. Hence, these words addressed to Moses, "Let me alone,"[24] when Moses sought by his prayer to stay the punishments God was about to inflict on His guilty people. Nothing is so efficacious in appeasing God, when His wrath is kindled; nothing so effectually averts His fury, when provoked; nothing so powerfully arrests His arm, when already uplifted to strike the wicked, as the prayers of the pious.[25]

[22] See Aug. epist. 121. c. 8.
[23] In Psal. 63.
[24] Exod. xxii. 10.
[25] On the fruits of prayer see Isid., lib. de Summo Bono, c. 37; Aug., serm. 230 de temp.; ep. 121 ad Probam.

THE PARTS OF PRAYER

The necessity and advantages of Christian prayer being thus explained, the faithful should also know how many, and what are the parts of which it is composed. That instruction on this subject pertains to the perfect discharge of the pastor's duty we learn from the Apostle. In his Epistle to Timothy, exhorting to pious and holy prayer, he carefully enumerates the parts of which it consists: "I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men." [26] Although the shades of distinction between these different parts of prayer are delicate and refined, yet the pastor, should he deem the explanation useful to his people, will consult on the subject the writings of St. Hilary and St. Augustine.[27]

THE TWO CHIEF PARTS OF PRAYER,—PETITION AND THANKSGIVING

There are two principal parts of prayer, petition and thanksgiving, and since these are the sources, as it were, from which all the others spring, they appear to us of too much importance to be omitted. For we approach God and offer Him the tribute of our worship, either to obtain some favor, or to return Him thanks for those with which His bounty every day enriches and adorns us. God Himself indicated both these necessary parts of prayer when He declared by the mouth of David: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." [28]

Who does not perceive how much we stand in need of the goodness and beneficence of God, if he but consider the extreme destitution and misery of man?

On the other hand, who that has eyes to see and understanding to judge, does not know God's loving kindness towards man, and the liberal bounty He exercises in our behalf? Wherever we cast our eyes, wherever we turn our thoughts, the admirable light of the divine goodness and beneficence beams upon us. What have we that is not the gift of His bounty? If, then, all things are

[26] 1 Tim. ii. 1.

[27] Hilar., in Psal. 140 on the words: "dirigatur oratio."; Aug., epist. 69. ad Paulin., before the middle; Cassian., Colla. 9. c. 8. et seq.; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 83.

[28] Psal. xlix. 15. See Basil., lib. Const. monast. c. 2.

the gifts and favors bestowed on us by His goodness, why should not everyone, as much as possible, celebrate the praises of God, and thank Him for His boundless beneficence.

DEGREES OF PETITION AND THANKSGIVING

Of these duties of petition and thanksgiving each contains many subordinate degrees. In order, therefore, that the faithful may not only pray but also pray in the best manner, the pastor will propose to them the most perfect manner of praying, and will exhort them to use it to the best of their ability.

THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF PRAYER: THE PRAYER OF THE JUST

What, then, is the best manner and the most exalted degree of prayer? It is that which is made use of by the pious and the just. Resting on the solid foundation of the true faith, they rise successively from one degree of prayer and virtue to another, until, at length, they reach that height of perfection, whence they can contemplate the infinite power, goodness, and wisdom of God; where, too, they are animated with the assured hope of obtaining not only those blessings which they desire in this life, but also those unutterable rewards which God has pledged Himself to grant to him who piously and religiously implores His assistance.[29]

Soaring as it were to heaven on these two wings, the soul approaches, in fervent desire, the throne of the Divinity; adores with rapturous praise and thanksgiving that great Being from whom she has received such inestimable blessings; and, like an only child, animated with singular piety and profound veneration, trustfully tells to her most beloved Father all her wants.

This sort of prayer the Sacred Scriptures express by the words "pouring out." "In his sight," says the prophet, "I pour out my prayer, but before Him I declare my trouble." [30] This means that he who draws near to God in prayer should conceal nothing, but pour out his whole soul in prayer, flying with confidence

[29] See Bernard. serm. 4. de quadrag.; serm. de quatuor modis orandi; Basil., loco jam citato.
[30] Ps. cxli. 3.

into the bosom of God, his most loving father. To this the Sacred Scriptures exhort us in these words: "Pour out thy heart before him," [31] "cast thy care upon the Lord." [32] This is that degree of prayer to which St. Augustine alludes when he says: "What faith believes, that hope and charity implore.[33]

THE SECOND DEGREE OF PRAYER: THE PRAYER OF SINNERS

Another degree of prayer is that of those who are weighed down by the guilt of mortal sin, but who strive, with what is called dead faith, to raise themselves from their condition and to ascend to God. But, in consequence of their languid state and the extreme weakness of their faith, they cannot raise themselves from the earth. Impressed with a just sense of the enormity of their crimes and stung with remorse of conscience, they bow themselves down with humility, and, far as they are removed from God, implore of Him a penitential sorrow, the pardon of their sins, and the peace of reconciliation.

The prayers of such persons are not rejected by God, but are graciously heard by Him. Nay, in His mercy, He generously invites such sinners to have recourse to Him, saying: "Come to me, all you that labor, and are heavily laden, and I will refresh you." [34] Of this class of sinners was the Publican, who, though he did not dare to raise his eyes towards heaven, left the Temple, as our Lord declares, more justified than the Pharisee.[35]

THE THIRD DEGREE OF PRAYER: THE PRAYER OF UNBELIEVERS

A third degree of prayer is that which is offered by those, who have not as yet been illumined with the light of faith; but who, when the divine goodness lights up in their souls the feeble glimmerings of their rational powers, are strongly moved to the desire and pursuit of truth and most earnestly pray for a knowledge of it. If they persevere in such dispositions, God, in His mercy, will not neglect their earnest endeavors, as we see verified by the

[31] Ps. lxi. 9.
[32] Ps. liv. 23. [33] Ench. cap. vii. [34] Matt. xi. 28.
[35] Luke xviii. 9. How sinners are heard see Aug., in Joan. tract. 44, 73; De verbis Domini, serm. 53; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 83. a. 16.

example of Cornelius the centurion.[36] The doors of the divine mercy are closed against none who sincerely ask for mercy.

THE LOWEST DEGREE OF PRAYER: THE PRAYER OF THE IMPENITENT

The last degree is that of those who, not only do not repent of their sins, but adding crime to crime dare frequently to ask pardon of God for those sins, in which they are resolved to continue. Under such circumstances and with such dispositions they would not presume to ask pardon from their fellow-man. The prayer of such sinners is not heard by God. It is recorded in Scripture of Antiochus: "Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy."[37] Whoever lives in this deplorable condition should be exhorted to wean himself from all affection to sin, to turn to God in good earnest and from the heart.

Sermon

The Necessity of Prayer

BY THE REV. FERDINAND HECKMANN, O.F.M.

NATURE OF PRAYER

There is no good work the performance of which is so often and so earnestly recommended to us in Holy Writ as prayer. How often do not the prophets of the Old Testament admonish us to pray. How often, and how forcibly did not our divine Saviour Himself urge us to pray, and to pray without ceasing. He Himself has taught us that simplest and yet sublimest of all prayers, the *Our Father*. How often do not the Apostles and Evangelists exhort us to pray for ourselves and each other that we may be saved. But above all our Lord and Saviour has given us the example. He labored during the day for the salvation of souls, and spent the nights in prayer to His heavenly Father. "He went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God," says the Evangelist of Him (Luke vi. 12). And again: "When He had dismissed the multitude, He

[36] Acts x. 8.

[37] II Mach. ix. 13.

went up into a mountain alone to pray" (Matt. xiv. 23). "And rising very early in the morning, going out He went into a desert place, and there prayed" (Mark i. 35). "And He retired into the desert and prayed" (Luke v. 16). This alone should suffice to induce us to pray often, and to pay more attention to how we ought to pray. For this purpose let us consider this morning what prayer is.

Prayer is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God to adore Him, to thank Him for His benefits, to ask His forgiveness, and to beg of Him all the graces we need, whether for soul or body. Prayer is, therefore, an address to Almighty God, a communing and conversing with God, a mysterious intercourse with Him. There can be nothing more noble, nothing more useful, nothing more delightful than this commerce of man with God. For prayer is the most perfect, the sublimest occupation to which a rational creature capable of love can devote itself. It is the life of the soul and calls into play all the faculties of the soul in their direction to God. For we lift up our minds in prayer to God to know Him, and our hearts to love Him, in order that in so doing we may serve Him and thus fulfil the object of religion and the threefold purpose of our creation which is to know God, to love and serve Him in this world in order that we may be eternally happy with Him in the world to come. Whether in our prayer we praise God's majesty, power, greatness, and glory, or thank Him for benefits bestowed, or ask His pardon and mercy, His graces and blessings, makes no essential difference, it is always a prayer.

NECESSITY OF PRAYER

Prayer is according to its very nature and essence a natural and necessary expression of our religious feelings; it is an act of the virtue of religion; without religion there is, and can be no prayer. But since our religious feelings principally live and move in the three divine virtues of faith, hope and charity, prayer may be called the pulse-beat of these virtues. What we hold as true in faith, aspire to in hope, and embrace in love, that we express in our prayer. Prayer, therefore, presupposes faith in God, hope in His goodness, and love of God, *i.e.*, a desire of

union with Him. "Whosoever," says St. Paul, "shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed?" (Rom. x. 13, 14). "Without faith it is impossible to please God" in prayer. In fact, we pray to God, because we believe He is able and willing to help us, and because we hope in His sacred promises, that in His infinite love and through the merits of Jesus Christ He will help us. By these three divine virtues of faith, hope and charity, God then, to whom we pray, moves us to prayer. Prayer is, therefore, like all other good things, a gift of God; for "we are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God," says St. Paul (2 Cor. iii. 5). And again: "No man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). For this reason God says in Holy Writ: "I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers" (Zach. xii. 10). "For," as the Apostle St. Paul tells us, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings," *i.e.*, inspireth us, and teacheth us to pray with great fervor (Rom. viii. 26).

Prayer is a natural and necessary expression of our religious feelings, because it is impossible for man, who as a spiritual and material being has a double nature, to shut up his thoughts and feelings in his heart: they will break through the barrier, they must burst forth like a pent-up stream; and therefore that saying of Holy Writ: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke vi. 45). What the breath which we inhale is to the body that prayer is to the soul; it is the breathing of the soul and the food of its life.

Prayer is so natural and necessary to the religious man that we find it practised everywhere and at all times. Go to the icy fields of the North or to the sandy deserts of the South, go to the farthest parts of the East or to the most shady parts of the West, everywhere you will find men who pray. Not only the Catholic, the Protestant, the Mohammedan, but also the idolator, the wild Indian, even the cannibal prays. A more convincing proof of the naturalness and necessity of prayer to man cannot be found. Intellect and reason must acknowledge a Creator, a

Father, a Lord and Benefactor to whom we are subject and upon whom we are altogether dependent, and we do and are accustomed to express this acknowledgment of our subjection and dependence in prayer. For prayer must primarily redound to the honor, glory, praise and worship of God and only secondarily to our own good, as our divine Saviour has so beautifully expressed in the petitions of the *Our Father*. The man, therefore, who does not pray debases himself to the level of the irrational creatures, he acts contrary to the dictates of his own nature, he does not listen to the voice of his reason. He is, in fact, a rebel against the divine Majesty by proclaiming his self-sufficiency and utter independence of God his Lord and Creator.

THE COMMANDMENT OF PRAYER

Although the obligation and necessity of prayer is already proclaimed to man by the natural law, it is one of the strictest and most necessary duties of a Christian imposed upon him by the Divine positive law, both for obtaining temporal happiness and eternal salvation and the means thereto. This obligation and necessity is founded upon two important truths of our holy Faith. The first is that of ourselves and our own natural strength, without the special help of God's grace, we cannot do the least thing towards our salvation; nay, that considering our natural proneness to evil, the violence of the passions, the many allurements to sin that surround us, and the continual attacks and snares of the devil "who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," we cannot, without the special assistance of the grace of God, live for any space of time without falling into mortal sin. And much less, can we ourselves, when fallen into that state of misery, rise out of it again by a sincere repentance without the grace of God. The second truth is, that the ordinary means which God has appointed by which the so necessary grace is obtained by us, is prayer. "Ask," says God, "and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth" (Matt. vii. 7). Our salvation, then, and all the means to obtain it, are the free gifts of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ. God, as the absolute Master of His gifts, can impose upon us whatever

conditions He pleases in order to obtain them from Him. Now the first and universal condition which He requires is, that we humbly acknowledge our want and unworthiness of His grace and help, and ask it of His goodness and mercy. As God "will have all men to be saved," He freely and generously bestows His grace on all that beg it of Him. Hence it is evident that prayer is the universal, efficacious means of obtaining from God all the necessary help to our salvation; it is the key which opens the treasures of heaven; it is the canal through which all graces come to our soul. It is so necessary to salvation that nothing else can take its place.

Hence also the repeated commands to pray laid down in the Holy Scriptures. "And Jesus spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1); there the word *ought* clearly implies a strict obligation. Again after describing the danger of being called out of this world unprepared, the only means He proposes for avoiding so great a misery, is watching and prayer. "Watch ye, therefore," He says, "praying at all times" (Luke xxi. 36). "Take heed, watch and pray; for you know not when the time is" (Mark xiii. 33). The same means He inculcates for strengthening us to overcome the many temptations to which we are daily exposed. "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). St. Paul inculcates the same duty when he says: "Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you all" (1 Thess. v. 17). And "take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God). By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit" (Eph. vi. 17). "Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving" (Col. iv. 2). "Be nothing solicitous; but in everything by prayer with supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. iv. 6). St. Peter is no less urgent upon the subject of prayer. "The end of all," he says, "is at hand. Be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayer" (1 Peter iv. 7). "If any of you want wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (Jam. i. v). And again: "Is any one of you sad? let him pray"

(Jam. v. 13). Therefore the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the Wise Man commands us: "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always, and be not afraid to be justified even to death; for the reward of God continueth forever" (Ecclus. xviii. 22). And he tells us that the truly wise man "will open his mouth in prayer, and make supplication for his sins" (Ecclus. xxxix. 7). We see from these passages of Holy Writ how frequently the duty of prayer is inculcated and urged upon us in most express terms, which shows beyond doubt how strong our obligation is to practice it. To do other things commanded may sometimes be impossible to us, but to pray is never impossible to us; consequently if we do not make use of prayer, the fault is entirely our own and the fatal consequences of this neglect will all be justly laid to our own charge. "You have not," says St. James, "because you ask not" (James iv. 2).

But you will answer: "We ask and often receive not, though Jesus says: Ask and you shall receive." St. James answers you, saying: "You ask and receive not; because you ask amiss" (James iv. 3). There are several conditions required on our part to which we must carefully attend in order that our prayer be agreeable to God and efficacious in obtaining what we ask of Him.

CONCLUSION

Thus we see why God does not hear so many of our prayers. Our soul is not in a state of His grace and friendship, or what we ask for is not conducive to our spiritual welfare. There is no attention, fervor and devotion in our prayers; they are mere words that might just as well proceed from a parrot or a phonograph. Him who prays without confidence God will not hear, for he insults Him to His face. Where there is no resignation and humility, pride is found and God resists the proud. Where perseverance is lacking, little faith is found, and faith is an essential prerequisite of our prayer being heard. Let us, then, always comply with this essential and most necessary duty of prayer in our Christian life and we shall want nothing. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble," says God, "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. xlix. 15). Remember that our happiness in this world and the world to come depends upon our prayer.

As we pray so we shall live; as we live so we shall die; and as we die we shall be for all eternity. Amen.

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

SUBJECT

PRAYER: ITS CONDITIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

TEXT

Amen, amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you.—John xvi. 23.

Analysis

Introduction: When our Lord at the Last Supper told the Apostles that He was about to leave them, their hearts were filled with sadness and loneliness. But to comfort them He promised to send them another Paraclete, His Holy Spirit, who would console them and take His place among them. Moreover, He gave them a further unfailing means of obtaining comfort and help in their sorrows and needs, and this was prayer to the Father in His name. At all times they could speak to, and commune with their heavenly Father; and to assure them that their prayers would be answered, He intro-

duced His promise with those solemn words, which are equivalent to an oath, "Amen, amen, I say to you." This guarantee of our Lord, however, that the Father will hear us, extends only to those prayers which are made in the name of Christ; that is, which have the proper qualities, and are accompanied by the proper conditions. He prays in the name of Christ who prays for that which pertains to salvation (St. Greg., St. Aug.).

I. The conditions of prayer. In order that our prayers may be infallibly heard, according to the promise of Christ, they must be accompanied by certain conditions: 1. We must pray for what is right and fitting, that is, for something pertaining to our salvation. 2. Our prayer must be for ourselves, for our own welfare. This does not mean that we should not also pray for others (to pray for others is a strict duty), but only that prayers offered for others are not infallibly heard, because the malice of those others may defeat our prayers for them. 3. Our prayer should be devout, which means: (a) we should pray with attention and from the heart, since voluntary distractions render prayer not only useless, but sinful; (b) we must really desire what we seek; (c) we must pray with humility, that is with resignation to God's will and with a profound feeling of our lowliness and unworthiness; (d) we should pray with confidence that we shall receive what we ask. The motives for confidence in prayer are the goodness of God, the many favors that have been obtained through prayer, the powerful intercession of Christ, who is our Advocate, and the grace of the Holy Ghost who assists us to pray. 4. We must pray perseveringly, that is, we should not grow tired of prayer if God does not hear us at once, but should continue to pray with increased fervor.

II. The circumstances of prayer. 1. The time. We can pray at all times, but we should pray especially in the morning and at night, that God may bless the labors of the day and protect us while we sleep. The practice of frequent ejaculations

during the day consumes but little time, and enables us to pray always. It is not necessary that our prayers be protracted, so long as we give a reasonable amount of time to them. A short prayer well made is far better than a long one poorly done. 2. The place. Of all places the Church is the most suitable for prayer, because it is the house of prayer, and the abode of Christ in the Eucharist; but prayer can very well be made in any place. 3. The posture of prayer. Prayers should be made in a becoming and respectful posture, *e.g.*, on the knees, with folded or outstretched hands, or the like; but they may also be said while walking, resting, sitting, or reclining. 4. The method of prayer. Prayer is not restricted to any particular method, such as the prayer book, the beads, or any set form of words, although those prayers which have the approbation of the Church and the Liturgy are the most useful and salutary. Mental prayer, which consists in thought alone, is superior to vocal prayer; but the latter should not be neglected, because it stimulates fervor and enables both the body and the soul to join in prayer.

Lessons. 1. We must try to give to our prayers those necessary conditions which make them of infallible efficacy. 2. In order that our prayers may not be wanting, we should prepare ourselves before hand, remotely, by good habits of life, by the practice of charity and humility, and by reverence for God and holy things; proximately, we should recollect ourselves before prayer, so as to banish distractions and raise our minds and hearts to God. 3. The practice of having evening family prayers in common, and of saying grace before and after meals should be cultivated in every Catholic household.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

Qualities of Prayer

I. PREPARATION FOR PRAYER

In Scripture we read: "Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God." [1] He tempts God who prays well but acts badly, and while he converses with God allows his mind to wander.

Since, then, the dispositions with which we pray are of such vital importance, the pastor should teach his pious hearers how to pray.

HUMILITY

The first disposition, then, which should accompany our prayers, is an unfeigned humility of soul, an acknowledgment of our unworthiness, and a conviction that, when we approach God in prayer, our sins render us undeserving, not only of receiving a propitious hearing from Him, but even of appearing in His presence.

This preparation is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. "He hath had regard to the prayer of the humble," says David, "and he hath not despised their petition." [2] "The prayer of him that humbleth himself," says Ecclesiasticus, "shall pierce the clouds." [3] Many other passages of the same kind will suggest themselves to the learned pastor. Hence we abstain from citing them here.

Two examples, however, at which we have already glanced, and which are apposite to our purpose, we shall not pass over in silence. The publican, "who, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven," [4] and the woman, a sinner, who, moved with sorrow, washed the feet of Christ our Lord, with her tears,[5] illustrate the great efficacy which Christian humility imparts to prayer.

[1] Eccl. xviii. 23. [2] Ps. ci. 18. [3] Eccl. xxxi. 21.
[4] Luke xviii. 13. [5] Luke vii. 37.

SORROW FOR SIN

The next disposition is a feeling of sorrow, arising from the recollection of our past sins, or, at least, some sense of regret, that we do not experience that sorrow. If the sinner bring not with him to prayer both, or, at least one of these dispositions, he cannot hope to obtain the pardon of his sins.

FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, ANGER, HATRED, AND INHUMANITY

There are some crimes, such as violence and murder, which are in a special way obstacles to the efficacy of our prayers, and we must, therefore, preserve our hands unstained by outrage and cruelty. Of such crimes the Lord says by the mouth of Isaias: "When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away my eyes from you; and when you multiply prayer, I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood." [6]

Anger and strife we should also studiously avoid, for they have great influence in preventing our prayers from being heard. "I will that men pray in every place," says St. Paul, "lifting up pure hands, without anger and contention." [7]

Implacable hatred of any person on account of injuries received is another obstacle to the efficacy of prayer, which we must guard against; for while we are under the influence of such feelings, it is impossible that we should obtain from God the pardon of our sins. "When you shall stand to pray," says our Lord, "forgive, if you have aught against any man;" [8] and, "if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences." [9]

Hardness and inhumanity to the poor we should also scrupulously avoid. For concerning men of this kind it was said: "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard." [10]

FREEDOM FROM PRIDE AND CONTEMPT OF GOD'S WORD

What shall we say of pride? How much it offends God, we learn from these words: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth

[6] Isa. i. 15. [7] 1 Tim. ii. 8. [8] Mark xi. 25.
[9] Matt. vi. 15. [10] Prov. xxi. 13.

grace to the humble." [11] What of the contempt of the divine oracles? "He that turneth away his ears," says Solomon, "from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." [12]

Here, however, we are not to understand that we are forbidden to pray for the forgiveness of the injuries we have done to our neighbor, of murder, anger, insensibility to the wants of the poor, of pride, contempt of God's word, in fine, of any other sin.

CONFIDENCE

Faith is another necessary quality for this preparation of soul. Without faith, we can have no knowledge of the omnipotence or mercy of God, which are the sources of our confidence in prayer, as Christ, our Lord Himself has taught: "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." [13] St. Augustine, speaking of this faith, thus comments on our Lord's words: "Without faith prayer is useless.[14]

The chief requisite, therefore, of a good prayer is, as we have already said, a firm and unwavering faith. This the Apostle shows by a strong antithesis: "How shall they call on him whom they have not believed?" [15] Believe, then, we must, both in order to pray, and that we be not wanting in that faith which renders prayer fruitful. For it is faith that leads to prayer, and it is prayer that gives strength and firmness to faith. This is the meaning of the exhortation of the martyr Ignatius, to those who would approach the throne of God in prayer: "Be not of doubtful mind in prayer; blessed is he who hath not doubted." Wherefore, to obtain from God what we ask, faith, and an assured confidence, are of first importance, according to the admonition of St. James: "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." [16]

MOTIVES OF CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER

There is much to inspire us with confidence in prayer. Among these are to be numbered the beneficence and bounty of God, displayed towards us, when He commands us to call Him "Father," thus giving us to understand that we are His children.

[11] James iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5. [12] Prov. xxviii. 9. [13] Matt. xxi. 22.
[14] Epist. 10. ad Hier. [15] Rom. x. 14. [16] James. i. 6.

Again there are the numberless instances of those whose prayers have been heard.

Further we have the mediation of our chief advocate, Christ the Lord, who is ever ready to assist us, as we read in St. John: "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just; and he is the propitiation for our sins." [17] In like manner Paul the Apostle says: "Christ Jesus, that died, yea, that is risen also again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." [18] In his epistle to Timothy the same Apostle writes: "For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus"; [19] and to the Hebrews he writes: "Wherefore, it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high-priest before God." [20] Unworthy, then, as we are, of obtaining our requests, yet considering and resting our claims upon the dignity of our great Mediator and Intercessor, Jesus Christ, we should hope and trust most confidently, that, through His merits, God will grant us all that we ask in the proper spirit of prayer.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is the author of our prayers; and under His guiding influence, we cannot fail to be heard. "We have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, (Father)." This Spirit succors our infirmity and enlightens our ignorance, in the discharge of the duty of prayer; nay, even, as the Apostle says, He "asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." [21]

Should we, then, at any time waver, not being sufficiently strong in faith, let us say, with the Apostle, "Lord, increase our faith"; [22] and, with the man mentioned in the Gospel, "Help my unbelief." [23]

CONFORMITY TO GOD'S WILL

But what most ensures the accomplishment of our desires, is the union of faith and hope with that correspondence on our part to the will of God, which makes us conform all our thoughts, actions, and prayers to God's law and pleasure. "If," He says,

[17] 1 John ii. 1, 2.
[18] Rom. viii. 34.
[19] 1 Tim. ii. 5.
[20] Heb. ii. 17.
[21] Rom. viii. 15, 26.
[22] Luke xvii. 5.
[23] Mark ix. 23.

"you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." [24]

In order, however, that all our prayers may be thus graciously heard, we must, as was previously observed, forget all injuries, cherish sentiments of good will, and practice kindness towards our neighbor.

II. HOW TO PRAY WELL

The manner of praying is also a matter of the highest moment. Though prayer in itself is good and salutary, yet if not performed in a proper manner it is unavailing. Often we do not obtain what we ask, because, in the words of St. James, we ask amiss.[25] The pastor, therefore, will instruct the faithful in the best manner of private and public prayer, and in the rules which have been delivered on this subject, according to the teaching of Christ our Lord.

WE MUST PRAY FROM THE HEART

We must, then, pray "in spirit and in truth"; [26] for the Heavenly Father seeks those who adore Him in spirit and in truth. He prays in this manner whose prayer proceeds from an interior and intense ardor of soul.[27]

This spiritual manner of praying does not exclude the use of vocal prayer. Nevertheless, that prayer, which is the vehement outpouring of the soul, deservedly holds the first place; and, although not uttered with the lips, it is heard by Him to whom the secrets of hearts are naked and open. He heard the silent prayer of Anna, the mother of Samuel, of whom we read, that she prayed, shedding many tears and only moving her lips.[28] Such was also the prayer of David, for he says: "My heart hath said to thee, my face hath sought thee." [29] In reading the Bible one will meet many similar examples.

[24] John xv. 7.
[25] James iv. 3.
[26] John iv. 23.
[27] On this manner of praying in spirit and in truth see the 17 books of Cyril of Alex. and St. Thomas I, 2. quæst. 83. art. 12.
[28] 1 Kings i. 10, 13.
[29] Ps. xxvi. 8.

VOCAL PRAYER SHOULD NOT BE NEGLECTED

But vocal prayer has also its advantages and necessity. It quickens the attention of the mind, and kindles the fervent devotion of the heart. "We sometimes," says St. Augustine, in his letter to Proba, "animate ourselves to more lively sentiments of devotion by having recourse to words and other signs; filled with pious emotion, we find it impossible at times to restrain the current of our feelings, and accordingly we express them in words; for while the soul exults with joy, the tongue should also give utterance to that exultation." [30] Vocal prayer, as we know from numerous passages of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the Epistles of St. Paul, was used by the Apostles; and, following their example, it becomes us also to offer to God the entire sacrifice of soul and body.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PRAYER

There are two sorts of vocal prayer, private and public. Private prayer is employed in order to assist interior attention and devotion; whereas, in public prayer, which has been instituted to excite the piety of the faithful, and has been prescribed for certain fixed times, the use of words is indispensably required.

TO PRAY IN SPIRIT IS PECULIAR TO CHRISTIANS

This practice of praying in spirit is peculiar to Christians and is not at all used by infidels. Of these Christ our Lord has said: "When you pray, speak not much, as the heathens; for they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not ye, therefore, like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask him." [31]

But though our Lord prohibits loquacity, He is so far from forbidding continuance in prayer which proceeds from the eager and prolonged devotion of the soul that by His own example He exhorts us to such prayer. Not only did He spend whole nights in prayer,[32] but also, "prayed the third time, saying the selfsame words." [33] The inference, therefore, to be drawn from the prohi-

[30] St. Aug. ad. Probam. cap. 8, 9, 10.
[31] Matt. vi. 7, 8. [32] Luke vi. 12. [33] Matt. xxvi. 44.

bition is, that prayers consisting of mere empty sounds are not to be addressed to God.[34]

THE PRAYERS OF THE HYPOCRITE ARE REJECTED BY GOD

Neither do the prayers of the hypocrite proceed from the heart; and against the imitation of their example, Christ our Lord warns us in these words: "When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues, and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Amen I say, to you they have received their reward. But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee."[35] Here the word "chamber" may be understood to mean the human heart, which we should not only enter, but should also close against every distraction from without that could deprive our prayer of its perfection. For then will our heavenly Father, who sees perfectly our hearts and secret thoughts, grant our petitions.

OUR PRAYERS SHOULD BE PERSEVERING

Another necessary condition of prayer is constancy. The great efficacy of perseverance, the Redeemer exemplifies by the conduct of the judge, who, while "he feared not God, nor regarded man," yet overcome by the persistence and importunity of the widow, yielded to her entreaties.[36] In our prayers to God we should, therefore, be persevering.

We must not imitate the example of those who become tired of praying, if, after having prayed once or twice, they succeed not in obtaining the object of their prayers. We should never be weary of the duty of prayer, as we are taught by the authority of Christ our Lord and of the Apostles. And should the will at any time fail us, we should beg of God by prayer the strength to persevere.

[34] See Aug. ep. 121. ad Probam, c. 9.
[35] Matt. vi. 5, 6.
[36] Luke xviii. 2, 3.

OUR PRAYERS SHOULD BE MADE IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

The Son of God would also have us present our prayers to the Father in His name; for, by His merits and the influence of His mediation, our prayers acquire such weight that they are heard by our heavenly Father. For He Himself says in St. John: "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name: ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full";[37] and again: "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do."[38]

OUR PRAYERS SHOULD BE FERVENT AND THANKFUL

Let us imitate the fervor of the saints in prayer; and to petition let us unite thanksgiving, imitating the example of the Apostles, who, as may be seen in the Epistles of St. Paul, always observed this salutary practice.

FASTING AND ALMS-DEEDS SHOULD BE JOINED TO PRAYER

To prayer let us unite fasting and alms-deeds. Fasting is most intimately connected with prayer. For the mind of one who is filled with food and drink is so borne down as not to be able to raise itself to the contemplation of God, or even to understand what prayer means.[39]

Alms-deeds have also an intimate connection with prayer. For what claim has he to the virtue of charity, who possessing the means of affording relief to those who depend on the assistance of others, refuses help to his neighbor and brother? How can he, whose heart is devoid of charity, demand assistance from God unless while imploring the pardon of his sins, he at the same time humbly beg of God to grant him the virtue of charity?

This triple remedy was, therefore, appointed by God to aid man in the attainment of salvation. For by sin we offend God, wrong our neighbor, or injure ourselves. The wrath of God we appease

[37] John xvi. 23, 24. [38] John xiv. 14.

[39] See Aug. on Psalm xlii, at the end; lib. de perfect. justitia resp. 17.; St. Leo. serm. 1. de jejunio septimi mensis; Petr. Chrys., serm. 43; Bern., in sent. sententia 11.

by prayer; our offences against man we redeem by alms-deeds; the stains of our own lives we wash away by fasting. Each of these remedies, it is true, is applicable to every sort of sin; they are, however, peculiarly adapted to those three which we have specially mentioned.

Sermon

Prayer in Our Lord's Name

BY THE VERY REV. F. C. DOYLE, O.S.B.

Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name. Ask, and you shall receive; that your joy may be full.—John xvi. 24.

INTRODUCTION

During the present week we shall celebrate the glorious Ascension of our Lord, a festival which is preceded by three days of solemn prayer, days on which the Litanies of the Saints are chanted and the intercession of all the heavenly Court is invoked that their prayers united with ours may obtain God's benediction upon the fruits of the earth. As if in anticipation of this public petition for graces and favors, the Church in her liturgy for this Sunday, inserts that memorable passage of the holy Gospel, in which our Lord urges upon us the duty of prayer, but of prayer *made in His name*. Therefore, in order to be in harmony with her spirit, I will, as briefly as possible, set before you concerning this method of prayer, what I have been able to gather for your instruction from the Scriptures, from the writings of those who have interpreted them, and from the devout meditations of saintly men. Let us, then, consider: (1) Why our Lord wishes us to pray in His name. (2) How we shall be able to comply with His wish.

WHY WE SHOULD PRAY IN OUR LORD'S NAME

Our Lord wills us to pray in His name, because of our unworthiness directly to hold converse with His eternal Father. That unworthiness is the result of the original sin in which we were born and of our own innumerable personal offences. For if we intelligently read the first chapters of Genesis, we

cannot fail to remark how familiar was man's intercourse with his Maker, as long as he continued faithful to God. God spoke to him and laid before him the condition on which man was to remain in Paradise; He brought before him all the living things of the creation, that from him they might receive their names. But when man had sinned, he hid himself from the face of God, and ventured forth to speak to God only when summoned as a trembling culprit to receive sentence of condemnation. After that sin he was unworthy personally to hold converse with God. He then stood in need of a mediator, of one who should intervene between him and God to present to God every petition for favor and grace. This was man's condition until the coming of Jesus Christ; for all the prayers and the sacrifices offered to God before that event were acceptable only in view of the great Mediator that was to come, and when He did at last appear in the world, clothed in our human nature, mankind had still the necessity to present to God through Him, the great Mediator, their prayers for every blessing of which they stood in need.

Of this unworthiness directly to approach God, and of the necessity for approaching Him only through the mediation of Christ, the Church makes us sensible by means of her Liturgy. For, in that Liturgy, if there is anything that strikes the intelligent reader or the student, it is her sense of man's sinfulness, and consequently of his unworthiness to hold converse with God. Thus, before approaching the altar, both the priest and the people acknowledge their guiltiness and confess their sins. While ascending to the altar, the priest implores God to take both from himself and from all present every sin, that with pure minds they may stand in the holy place. As he bends over the altar before proceeding to read the Introit, he beseeches God, by the merits of the saints whose relics are there present, mercifully to be indulgent to all his sins. On returning to the middle of the altar, he nine times implores God to have mercy on all present by reason of their manifold sins. At the Offertory, he humbly asks God to accept the spotless victim which he, the priest and God's unworthy servant, presents for our own and the people's innumerable

offences, negligences, and sins. Before receiving the sacred elements, he appeals for mercy to the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world. Finally, all or nearly all the petitions offered to God by the Church are offered to Him through Jesus Christ: *"Per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum."*

Therefore, in whatever way we may wish to hold converse with God, whether it is to adore Him or to thank Him, whether it is to ask pardon for sin or to implore graces necessary for salvation, it must be through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

If we wish to adore God, how otherwise can we do it than through Jesus Christ? For, what is it "to adore God"? It is to praise His divine perfections; it is to recognize His infinite greatness and our own nothingness; it is to humble ourselves beneath His almighty hand; it is to honor His supreme majesty and to reverence Him as our sovereign Lord, the Master of all things from Whom we have received all that we have, all that we are. Now, how can we pay to God this supreme act of worship? We are but wretched creatures, miserable sinners, and from the mouths of sinners worship is not seemly. Therefore, it must be paid to God through Jesus Christ, for God is so great that He cannot be fully honored but by His Son. If we may so speak, God's eyes are turned only upon those who are sprinkled with the blood of Christ; His ears are open only to the voice of Christ. It is in consequence of this truth, as I have said, that all the prayers of the Church are directed to God through Jesus Christ: *"Per Christum Jesum Dominum nostrum,"* and that even the heavenly hosts are said by her to act in like manner. For whether militant or triumphant, she presents herself before God only when clothed in the merits and sprinkled with the Blood of Christ. She recognizes that her adoration and her prayer have weight with God only when presented to Him by the Word Incarnate, and she makes us feel that we can escape the sword of the exterminating angel only when cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb Whom she offers for us. Therefore, when we wish to adore God we must, in imitation of Holy Church, offer to Him our adoration through Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Mediator.

Adoration, however, is not the only duty that, as creatures, we owe to God. For, when we contemplate the innumerable benefits

which He has bestowed upon us, and those which every day, nay, well nigh at every moment of the day, He continues to shower upon us, the duty of thanksgiving is urged upon us and it becomes for us a delightful necessity. Now although our very nature itself as well as our reason prompts us to make this offering to God, yet St. Paul does not deem it fitting to leave us to our instincts in this matter and to the almost spontaneous outpouring of thanks that well from a good heart. For the Ephesians to whom he is writing, and for us all he makes it a sort of precept when he says: "Give thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God and the Father" (Eph. v. 20). Hence, according to the Apostle, this species of prayer is to be offered *always;* it is to be made for *all* things, whether these seem to us to be adverse or advantageous, to be blessings or misfortunes. Nevertheless, though evidently eager and anxious that His disciples should thus continually and for every occurrence of life send up to God the incense of their gratitude, he does not allow them to infer that they may, in their own name, in their own personality offer this sacrifice to God. He distinctly tells them that it must be made "in the name of Jesus Christ." Why does he do so? Because only the Son of God can speak to the Father for us; or, as St. Ambrose expresses the thought: "Christ is our mouth through which we speak to the Father" (De Isaac. Cap. 8). Consequently, only the thanks uttered for us by Him are worthy of the eternal Father's acceptance. It is only natural that as God's children, we should offer to Him the meed of our adoration and our thanks. But are we always loving and obedient children? Do we not sometimes set aside His will and revolt from Him, thus staining our souls with the guilt of deadly sin? Each of us looking into his heart will be able to see, at least in a dim sort of way, the number, the enormity, and the malice of his transgressions. What then is more natural than that, appalled by our sinfulness, we should fall on our knees and humbly ask for pardon? We are not worthy to win it for ourselves, therefore, we must seek out a mediator to stand between us and God, to screen us from His wrath. Who shall this be, that shall obtain for us pardon, mercy, reconciliation? Is there any other that can do this for us than Jesus Christ? No, there is no other; for, though

we may and we ought to implore the intercession of God's saints, yet these being like ourselves only creatures, may intervene between us and God only as secondary mediators, that is to say, by humble prayer. Jesus Christ is the one Mediator for salvation, being made the victim of propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. Without His intervention, there can be no pardon. Without Him, anything that we may do is worthless in the sight of God. Vain is it for us to fast, to give alms, to macerate our sinful flesh, in order to obtain pardon. These works, though good in themselves, are without merit for eternal life, are barren, fruitless, worthless, unless they are fertilized by union with the all suffering merits of Christ; for, "without that union, we can do nothing" worthy of God's notice or of God's reward. Therefore, in consequence of our inability to satisfy the demands of divine justice, and by so doing to obtain pardon of our sins, our only hope of forgiveness it to approach the Eternal Father through Jesus Christ, to beseech that loving Father not to look on our wrong-doing, but to look on the face of Christ, to regard us as covered by the personality of Him who for our sakes hung upon the Cross.

If, in addition to our service of adoration, thanksgiving, and petition for pardon, we should desire to offer to God supplications for the many graces of which we stand in need in order to win our way into heaven, these supplications must be presented to God, through Jesus Christ. Why is this? It is because Christ has merited them for us. Consequently, in order to obtain these graces from the Father, we must unite ourselves with Christ, and thus united and by that union constituting, as it were, one person with Him, our petitions become worthy of the Father's notice; to them He will lend a willing ear; and will mercifully accord to us the favors for which we plead. Of this our Lord gives us an assurance when He says: "If you remain in me, and my words remain in you; you shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done to you" (John xv. 7). If in addition to the reason already given for the necessity for union with Christ, we ask for another reason that will, perhaps, still further confirm what has been said, we shall find it in the fact that, with respect to

God, we are as mendicants are with respect to the wealthy from whom they ask for alms. When they cry to the rich for aid, they feel convinced that from them they will receive what they desire if their petition is presented in the name of a beloved son or of a beloved daughter: "So we also, when we ask God for graces, are as beggars before Him, and our cry to Him for help is sent up to Him in the name of His beloved Son. What is it that we ask for? It is for God Himself; it is for God's grace; it is for heaven; it is for the possession of eternal glory" (St. Aug.: Sermon 15 De Dom.: c. 2). How else than in the name and for the love of Christ Himself, ought we to ask for favors so great? Of ourselves we deserve nothing, and by reason of our sins we are in God's sight objects of horror; but when we make our petitions in Christ's name, we become in some sort one with Him; we are, as it were, hidden behind Him; we cease to be abominable in God's eyes and we shall, of a certainty, obtain that of which we stand in need: "Amen, Amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you."

These, then, are the reasons why we should present our petitions to God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

HOW WE PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Enlightened by these reasons, and through that enlightenment being made eager to pray to the Father as Jesus would have us pray, we may now consider the qualities that must enter into our prayer in order that it may be said to be made "in the name of Jesus Christ"; or, in other words, how we must pray, in order to comply with our Lord's will.

FAITH AND CHARITY

It will at once occur to every one that a fundamental condition of prayer made in Christ's name must be a firm faith or belief in the Incarnate Word, the God-man, Christ Jesus, as our Mediator, a belief that our prayer is made with His intercession and in virtue of His merits. Without that faith, in vain shall we pray and cry to God; for it is only through

Christ that we men have access to God (Ephes. ii. 18). Therefore it is that, speaking of Himself, our Lord says: "I am the gate; I am the way. No man cometh to the Father but by me." This faith must be animated by love of God or charity, by which words I do not mean to say that we cannot pray unless we are in the state of grace, but only that our love of God must be of such a nature as to have in it at least an incipient desire of salvation and of a thorough conversion of heart, concerning which desire St. Paul says: "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord, depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). Of this departure or separation from what is iniquitous, our common sense will enable us to see the necessity; for it tells us that, if we are at variance with even our fellowmen, and if we wish to obtain from them any favor, our first step must be to reconcile ourselves to them by expressing regret or sorrow for the difference that has arisen. If we will not do this, vain is it for us to hope that between us and them the wall of separation will be broken down. Of necessity, therefore, must we act in the same way if we desire to be reconciled to God. If, by reason of our sins, we are at enmity with Him, sorrow for that which has caused this enmity must first swell up in our hearts. If there be no sorrow, our prayer will not be granted.

CONFIDENCE

However, prayer, even when animated by faith and charity, requires the further condition of being offered with full confidence in the bounty and mercy of God; for then only can it be said to be made in the name of Christ. To this confidence St. Paul exhorts us. When writing to the Hebrews, he says: "Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (Heb. iv. 16). In these words, he teaches us that confidence is one of the conditions for obtaining mercy and the aid necessary for winning eternal salvation. His doctrine is, if we may say so, still further corroborated by St. James; for that Apostle warns those who with weak or wavering confidence send up their petitions to God, that they need not look for mercy or

for aid. Furthermore, to pray in the name of Christ is to ask for those things that will meet with His approval. Whatever pertains to our eternal salvation will of a certainty secure that approval; for He has told us to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice. Consequently, when we ask for graces that will enable us to win the crown of eternal life, we may be perfectly certain that we shall obtain them; for our prayer for these graces is made in the name of Christ Who desires our salvation even more earnestly than we ourselves desire it. Nevertheless, we must not be surprised if when we petition for some particular grace pertaining to salvation, as, for instance, freedom from harassing temptations, we do not obtain it; for God knows better than we do, what is advantageous for us. Therefore He does not, in certain cases, give us that for which we crave, but He gives us that of which we stand in greater need. Thus, when St. Paul over and over again asked to be freed from the devil's temptations, God did not grant his prayer. He gave him instead of that for which he craved, strength to repel the onslaughts of Satan and thus to acquire for himself a richer store of merits.

RESIGNATION

Now, it may be asked, are we allowed to pray for temporal good things? There can be no doubt that we are; for we may lawfully ask for that which we may lawfully enjoy. Hence, St. Paul bids us pray for our rulers, that through their wise government we may have peace and tranquillity. Our Lord commands us to pray for our daily bread. The Church encourages us to ask for the fruitfulness of our lands, for good seasons, for health, for prosperity and for numberless other temporal blessings. But in praying for these things which are not essential but only useful and helpful for salvation we shall not pray in the name of Christ unless we ask for them with full submission to God's will, that is to say, if they will contribute to our eternal well being. Thus, when St. Peter prayed to remain on Thabor that he might enjoy the sensible sweetness of the entrancing vision, he was not heard. When the sons of Zebedee asked Jesus that they might sit the one

on His right hand and the other on His left, in His heavenly kingdom, their petition also was set aside because they desired to satisfy their ambition. These prayers being for matters of the purely natural order, were not granted. They were not made in Christ's name. Therefore, when we ask for benefits of this kind, our petition should always have in it this condition: "If it is for our advantage, and if God should see that it will profit us unto eternal life."

MORTIFICATION, RECOLLECTION

Lastly, to pray in Christ's name, is to imitate Him in the manner of His prayer. How did He pray? St. Paul tells us that our Lord prayed "with a strong cry and tears," thereby manifesting to us His deep humility when, as man, He held converse with the Father. He joined fasting with prayer, to teach us that mortification should go hand in hand with our petitions to God for that of which we feel the need. He prayed with the profoundest recollection, either kneeling or prostrate on the earth. It is by imitating Him in this His manner of prayer that we shall pray in His name.

From what I have said, you now know both *why* our Lord bids us pray in His name, and *how* you are to act in order to carry out His will in this respect. When you examine into the nature of the petitions which you have sent up to heaven, can you say that they have been made with a deep sense of your unworthiness to approach to God, of your nothingness, and consequently, of the necessity for presenting them to God through the mediation of Christ? Have you animated your prayers with the qualities or conditions necessary to make them acceptable to God? You know what those qualities or conditions are. Your prayers should be full of confidence; they should be full of love for your heavenly Father; they should petition for only those things that will contribute to your salvation. Therefore, make now a firm resolve henceforth to pray in this manner and beseech our Lord for the grace that will enable you thus to pray. If you obtain that grace, as you most certainly will obtain it, you will always pray in Christ's name, "and all whatsoever you ask will be granted to you."

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FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

SUBJECT

THE HOLY GHOST: HIS INTERNAL MISSION

TEXT

You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.—Acts i. 8.

Analysis

Introduction. Just before ascending to His heavenly Father our Lord enjoined upon the Apostles that they should remain in Jerusalem after His departure until the Paraclete, whom He would send, should come upon them. It was this divine Spirit that was to strengthen and teach the Apostles, enabling them to go forth in fortitude and knowledge to the world, and bear witness to Christ and His teachings. This is called the visible mission of the Holy Ghost, because it was accompanied by the external signs of tongues of fire and the sound of a mighty wind. But the same Holy Spirit has also an invisible mission in the soul of each of the just, which enables us in

our own measure to bear testimony to Christ, especially by obeying the teachings of His Church and walking the way of His Commandments. What this indwelling of the Holy Ghost means for us, and the wondrous effects it produces in our souls, we shall now proceed to consider.

I. **The receiving of the Holy Ghost.** 1. God is everywhere, but in the souls of the just He exists in a special manner, that is, as a friend with a friend. This special indwelling of God in the soul is attributed to the Holy Ghost because it is a work of love. 2. Christ in to-day's Epistle promises to the Apostles this indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that the Holy Ghost had never been received before, because we know from the Scriptures that He resided in the prophets, in Zachary, in John the Baptist, in Simeon, and in the other just of the Old Law; neither does it mean that the Holy Ghost had not been received by the Apostles before, because we read that they had already received this Divine Spirit (John xx. 22). The meaning, then, of to-day's promise is that after Christ's entering into glory He would send the Holy Ghost more abundantly, and that the Spirit would dwell within the Apostles more intimately and more perfectly.

II. **The effects of receiving the Holy Ghost.** 1. Sanctification, by means of which the soul becomes the adopted child of God. We are born of the Spirit in Baptism, and strengthened by Him in Confirmation. 2. Charity and the other supernatural virtues are also "poured out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). 3. The Holy Ghost inspires and moves the soul with actual graces, such as, secret warnings and invitations. 4. The Holy Ghost further bestows upon the soul His seven gifts, by means of which the soul is strengthened so as to obey more easily His warnings and promptings. These seven gifts are: (a) knowledge, which enables us to see God in His own creation; (b) understanding, which perfects the mind for penetrating the truths of faith; (c) wisdom, which makes us see all things in their

highest cause, God; (d) counsel, which perfects the intelligence, helping it properly to decide in what concerns God and salvation; (e) fortitude, which perfects the will patiently to endure trials; (f) piety, which perfects the *attracted,* or concupiscible, emotions of love, desire, joy, etc., and makes them find their greatest satisfaction in God; (g) fear of the Lord, which perfects the *repelled,* or irascible, emotions of fear, desperation, etc., and which out of love keeps us from offending God. 5. The possession of these seven gifts leads to the performance of certain virtuous acts, called the Beatitudes, which produce a joy that is a foretaste of heaven. 6. The last consequence of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost are the fruits of the Spirit—charity, joy, peace, etc., which give sweetness and relish to the practice of virtue.

Conclusion. 1. From the foregoing considerations we can see that all we possess in the supernatural life comes from the Holy Spirit, in whom, consequently, all our hope and confidence should be placed. 2. How great is the dignity conferred on man by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and how zealous he should be ever to retain the presence of this Divine Spirit and co-operate with Him!

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part I

(See Pentecost Sunday in Dogmatic Series)

Sermon

Living and Walking in the Spirit

BY DOM SAVINIEN LOUISMET, O.S.B.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.—Gal. v. 25.

THE WORKS OF THE HOLY GHOST

Dear Brethren in Jesus Christ: There are hardly any Christians nowadays in the plight of those Ephesians who had to own to St. Paul that they did not even know whether the Holy Ghost existed. "He said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost" (Acts xix. 2).

Every Christian, as a rule, be he ever so ignorant, knows at least how to sign himself with the Sign of the Cross, saying at the same time: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: thus making an explicit profession of faith in each of the three Divine Persons, and consequently in the Holy Ghost.

There are very few Christians, even from among the most tepid and negligent, who cannot at least recite the Apostles' Creed, where the special work assigned by appropriation to each of the three Divine Persons is explicitly set forth, thus: the work of creation to the Father, that of our redemption to the Son, that of sanctification to the Holy Ghost.

Well-instructed Christians are moreover aware that the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son as from one principle, by way of substantial spiration or breathing forth of love, a mode of procession quite special and unique to which nothing created can be compared, and that the production of the Holy Ghost completes and closes the cycle of processions which take place within the Divine essence.

The saints and the mystical writers expatiate on the fact that the Holy Ghost is in Himself the very sweetness of God, the very joy which God the Father and God the Son find in one another, their eternal effusion of mutual love causing to both infinite delights. And as in the Divine essence there is nothing accidental, but all is substance at its highest, this joy of God, this infinite sweetness, this love, proceeding from both the Father and the Son and yet distinct from each one of them, constitutes a third Person. The Holy Ghost is in the Father and the Son, He is of them, and He is one with them, a third infinite Person, in the one absolutely simple and undivided essence of the Godhead.

It is also common knowledge that, in the beginning, when God created heaven and earth, the Holy Ghost moved over the face of the deep, and prepared the elements of the world to be evolved into the cosmos; that is to say, into the beautiful material universe such as we see it now. That He inspired the Prophets and the sacred writers of both the Old and the New Testament and spoke through them. That the Holy

Ghost is the Divine Person, who wrought, in the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the marvel of the Virgin Conception of Christ and of His Virgin birth; and that, as He had formed miraculously the Body of Christ out of the flesh and blood of Mary, so He filled both the Body and Soul of Christ already united to the Person of the Word with the fullness of His gifts and charisms. Isaias the Prophet had foretold this seven hundred years before the event in these glowing words: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Is. xi. 1, 2).

Finally, it is common knowledge also that the Holy Ghost is in a way the very Soul of the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church, and that He was infused into the corporate body of the infant Church, on the day of the first Christian Pentecost, ten days after the Ascension of our Lord, whilst the Apostles with the Blessed Virgin Mary and a few Disciples and holy women, were assembled and praying together in one place. Tradition has it that the place was the room in which our Lord at the Last Supper instituted the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist. The Acts of the Apostles relate the event in these words: "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind, and it filled the whole house, and there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 2-4).

Now, Brethren, all these informations about the Person and the work of the Holy Ghost are common knowledge among Christians of all grades of instruction. What seems to be less commonly known, or, we had perhaps better say, less apprehended, or less adverted to, is the part which the Holy Ghost plays in the life of every one of us, or which He would play if we would but let Him. This is what I will now try and explain at some length.

I want first to tell you what the Holy Ghost brings to a man

on coming by sanctifying grace to dwell in his body and soul. And then, what the Holy Ghost expects that man to do. This doctrine is contained, as in a nutshell, in the words of St. Paul: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." We live in the Spirit when we are in the state of grace; we walk in the spirit when we work out diligently the resources of our state of grace.

VIRTUES AND GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

It is soon said that the Holy Ghost's indwelling in the Christian man makes of him a something divine. It does not take long to enunciate the bare statement; but if we want to understand all it means we must look more particularly into it. Let us then unfold this doctrine. Let us bring into view one after the other of its points, and if this does not throw us into an ecstasy of joy and does not make us break out into songs of thanksgiving, we must indeed be dull and heavy of heart.

One of the earliest Fathers of the Church is credited with having originated the saying, many times repeated after him, that "a Christian is a man composed of a body and a soul and the Holy Ghost." Such a definition, even with what it has of paradoxical may well serve the purpose of illustrating the word of St. Paul, that a Christian is "nova creatura," a new being, very different from what he was before his Baptism, for then he was the purely natural "animal rationabile" of the philosopher. A new creature, one, as says our Lord to Nicodemus, "born again of water and the Holy Ghost," "the spiritual man" of whom St. Paul assures us (1 Cor. ii. 15) that "he judgeth all things"; that is to say, he takes a right estimation of the relative value of things temporal and things eternal, and that "he himself is judged of no man"; that is to say, that he cannot be understood by the slaves of sin and infidelity. They cannot make him out. How could they? They are flesh and he is spirit, for, says again our Lord, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John iii. 6).

"Nova creatura": altogether a new being, with a new and infinitely higher end proposed for him to attain and accepted

by him, and equipped with a set of new and marvelous faculties corresponding to this supernatural end, which God sets before him, and which is none other than God Himself, to be known even as He knows Himself, and to be enjoyed in perfect charity and beatific vision.

Thus the Holy Ghost, on coming to dwell by sanctifying grace in man, brings also with Himself the infused supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. These are the proper tools or faculties of the new being, the Christian, by which he is enabled to apprehend the mysteries of God and to lay hold on God Himself. Faith and Hope are as the two eyes of the Christian, and twofold charity, or the love of God and the love of one's neighbor, are his two hands, so to say, The Holy Ghost has given him these.

Moreover, the Holy Ghost brings with Himself also the infused moral virtues which enable the Christian to cope with the things of this world, animate and inanimate, in a way becoming one who is set so far above them in supernatural dignity and nobility. Thus, not only are the natural faculties of understanding and will in the Christian made capable, by Faith, Hope and Charity, of applying themselves to God as He reveals Himself to us in Holy Writ, but they are moreover made capable of applying themselves at the same time, according to the exigencies of our present condition, to the things of this world, without receiving any detriment or injury from them, without falling away from the lofty dignity of a true child of God. The dictates of right reason and the exercise of free will, when informed with the infused virtues, render every act of the Christian, even the lowliest and most material ones, such as eating, manual labor, taking one's repose, meritorious of an everlasting reward.

Nor is this all. Besides the infused virtues, as well moral as theological, the Holy Ghost brings with Himself into the Christian soul His Seven Gifts. Now what are these? They are a complement of the virtues, an addition to them, a marvelous perfecting of them, their crowning perfection. Whilst the virtues enable a man to move himself as of himself to the acts of justice and sanctity, according to the dictates of right

reason, either in regard to the things of this world or in regard to the mysteries of faith, the Gifts moreover enable that man to be moved in regard to the same objects, directly by the motion of the Holy Ghost, and thus to be raised to much higher effects of sanctity, swifter in their mode of operation and incomparably more far-reaching.

The ancient Fathers and medieval Doctors had an apt illustration of the difference between the virtues and the gifts. They derived it from the modes of navigation in use in their times. They compared the operations of the virtues to the low and laborious process of navigating a galley by force of oars, and those of the Gifts to the considerable additional help received from the sails when spread to the wind.

Thus equipped, with these supernatural faculties and with the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in him, is not the Christian indeed a marvelous new being, a god among men? Of such did the Prophet pronounce: "I have said: You are gods and all of you the sons of the Most High" (Is. cxxxi. 6). Brethren, let me repeat it: if the knowledge of so lofty a dignity does not throw us into an ecstasy of joy and does not cause us to break forth into songs of thanksgiving, then indeed we are "dull and heavy of heart" (Luke xxiv. 25).

CO-OPERATION WITH THE HOLY GHOST

"We live in the Spirit," we are alive, divinely alive, when we are in the state of grace. Does it not then seem that our "walking in the Spirit also," that is to say, our acting divinely, our working out the resources of our state of grace by their full extent, should follow as a matter of course.

In the physical order, the fact of our having eyes to see, feet to walk with, hands to grasp things, brains to think out a plan of action, and a will to resolve and undertake, this very fact, coupled with the fundamental one that we are alive, is enough. We proceed at once to make use of all these faculties and to turn them to good purpose, for the enjoyment of natural life. Should it not be the same in the supernatural order? Should we not only be found diligently plying our new faculties of Faith, Hope and Charity? and reaping a bounteous crop

of good works from the seed of our infused moral virtues? and taking full advantage of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost and thus making rapid progress towards perfection?

It should indeed be so. Now is it so, as a matter of fact?

It is so with the saints. It is so with the true servants of God. Their state of grace is but one-half of their spiritual fortune, their life of grace is the other half. "Lord, said the good and faithful servant of the Gospel, thou didst deliver to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above" (Matt. xxv. 20).

But alas, the saints, the good and faithful servants, are very few. An enormous number of Christians never come quite up to the mark. They live in the Spirit, yes, and yet they do not walk in the Spirit: they are in the state of grace, but they do not do the deeds of grace; they have the faculties proper to the new being, the supernatural faculties of Faith, Hope and Charity, but they hardly make any use of them. Nor do we see that they are particularly and supernaturally prudent, and just, and temperate, and strong, or that the seven Gifts have their effects in them. They have received their five talents even as the Saints, but instead of employing them to the gaining of other five over and above, they content themselves with keeping them wrapped in a napkin or hid in the earth.

If a man were to keep his right arm in a sling, very soon he could not use that arm, though there was nothing the matter with it. Many Christians carry their faith, and their hope, and their charity in a sling; I mean they never exercise them; the motives of their actions are purely natural. In the Pyramids of Egypt, in the tombs of the Kings, when they were opened in the course of the last century, some wheat was found which had remained there thousands of years without germinating because shut out of all atmospheric influences; but as soon as it was brought to the light of day and thrown in the ground it sprouted and produced ears of corn just like any other wheat. If you make your heart a sealed tomb, impervious to the influence of the actual graces of God, instead of a soft, rich soil which receives and drinks in with avidity

the dew, and the rain, and the light, and the heat, then the seeds of the moral virtues deposited in you at Baptism will never come to anything. As for the gifts of the Holy Ghost it is manifest that they call for the wilful co-operation of man in order to obtain their effect. It stands to reason that sails will not help the ship if they are not spread but kept tightly furled or even stowed away at the bottom of the ship.

Thus is the very presence of the Holy Ghost in the Christian soul made ineffectual. Omnipotence itself, the Omnipotent Love of God, finds himself gagged and manacled for want of the good will and co-operation of the Christian, which is required as a necessary condition for God to work His will in us. But, O my Brethren, is not this a monstrous indignity for us to offer to a Divine Person? And is it not a monstrous anomaly that one should live in the Spirit and yet not walk in the Spirit, that one should be a Divine being and yet not act Divinely; in other words, that one should receive so much from God and yet not be a Saint?

Why do we not take more notice of the Holy Ghost in us? It is certain that if we had a very wealthy and generous friend who chose to live in our house and place all his riches at our disposal we would not be slow in taking advantage of his good will. We would certainly behave nicely to him, entertain him, listen to what he would have to say to us, cheerfully and diligently carry out his wishes. Now, why can we not act at least as well towards the Holy Ghost, who makes Himself our personal friend, our guest, our abiding possession?

One reason lies in the fact that it costs us an effort to think of Him who is a pure spirit, indeed the purest of pure spirits, being God Himself. We have never seen a spirit, not even our own soul, which is one. In our present condition we can have direct perception but of bodily objects. We know one another and even ourselves but by the help of our bodily senses, the whole world of things invisible, angels, devils, souls, God Himself, being all shut out of our direct apprehension. Our knowledge of these is got partly by dint of reasoning and partly by Faith. This explains that we have such a difficulty in grasping the fact of the abiding presence of the

Holy Ghost in us. Much more easily do we represent to ourselves the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He is not only God but also man. Through His Sacred Humanity we take hold of His Divinity. Even in the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, though His very Humanity is hidden, there are the sacred species which help us to grasp the reality of His dear presence. Now there is nothing of the kind to help us in our mutual relations with the Holy Ghost.

Notwithstanding this difficulty it remains true that to a proper appreciation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in us is attached in great part our progress in virtue, in the love of God, in sanctity. It will cost us an effort to think of Him? Very well: let us make the effort. How richly we shall be rewarded even during the present life. Very soon we shall see a change, a very great change in the land of our soul; it will be blessed with the twelve fruits of the Spirit enumerated by St. Paul: "Charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity" (Gal. v. 22, 23). Nay, the Beatitudes, which are the very acme and perfection of Christian life on earth, will follow, and turn everything that happens to our soul into a foretaste of the glory and happiness of Heaven, which I wish to you.

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

SUBJECT

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST

TEXT

When the Paraclete cometh whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me.—JOHN XV. 26.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The words of this Gospel, which our Lord spoke to the Apostles the last night of His mortal life, were intended not only for them, but for their successors as well. They contain a sublime promise which was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles to enlighten and strengthen them, and to be with them and their successors all days, governing and guiding the Church, and teaching it all truth to the end of the world. But this divine presence of the Spirit of God is not only in the Church which He teaches and guides, but also in the individual Christian soul which at Baptism is the recipient of His manifold gifts, graces and fruits. On the Feast of the Ascension we spoke in a general way on the internal mission of the Holy Ghost, that is, on His gifts and graces to the soul. To-day we shall dwell more at length on these special fruits which are the result of the presence within us of this same Holy Spirit and His gifts.

I. Meaning of the fruits of the Holy Ghost. 1. By the fruits of the Holy Ghost we understand certain acts of the soul in the state of grace which spring from the presence of the gifts of the Paraclete within us, and whose exercise is attended by spiritual sweetness and delight; they are the full ripe product of the theological virtues and the seven gifts of the Spirit; they are the flowers and fruits of the indwelling divine life. 2. St. Paul (Gal. v. 22) enumerates twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, and contrasts them with the works of the flesh. It was not the inten-

tion of the Apostle to mention all of these divine fruits, but only the principal ones. Other acts of virtue, in fact, may be attended with pleasure, and therefore be fruits of the Holy Ghost.

II. The principal fruits of the Holy Ghost. 1. Certain of these twelve fruits perfect the soul in itself. Such are: (a) *charity,* by which the habit of charity is made active; (b) *joy,* by which the soul is made glad and rejoices over the testimony of a good conscience; (c) *peace,* by which the soul is undisturbed by internal or external annoyances; (d) *patience,* which teaches resignation in the trials of life; (e) *longsuffering,* which enables the soul to bear with the delay of answers to prayer, and other things. 2. Other fruits of the Holy Ghost dispose us with regard to our neighbor: (a) *goodness,* which is a willingness to serve and oblige others; (b) *kindness,* which is the actual doing of good to others by words, deeds and manner; (c) *mildness,* or the absence of resentment, ill-will and anger in dealing with difficult persons; (d) *fidelity,* or loyalty to engagements, faithfulness in discharging duty and a freedom from all untruthfulness, deceit and guile. 3. Still others of these divine fruits regulate man's actions. These are: (a) *modesty,* which is external moderation and reserve in speech, dress and manner; (b) *continency,* which is the refraining from all sexual desires; (c) *chastity,* which regulates the desires of the flesh in accordance with the law of God.

Exhortation. 1. God has given us the Holy Ghost and His gifts, and it belongs to us to co-operate with them, thus yielding spiritual fruit; otherwise we shall merit the curse of the barren fig tree. 2. Let us pray to God's Holy Spirit that we may produce the fruits of good works thirty, sixty and a hundred fold.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part I

(See Pentecost Sunday in Dogmatic Series)

Sermon

The Fruits of the Holy Ghost

BY THE REV. C. M. THUENTE, O.P.

When the Paraclete cometh whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me.—John xv. 26.

Last Thursday we celebrated the glorious mystery of the Ascension of Jesus Christ. Next Sunday we shall celebrate the comforting mystery of the coming of the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. The days between the Ascension and Pentecost, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Apostles, the disciples, the holy women, spent in the cenacle of Jerusalem, persevering with one mind in prayer. Jesus promised to send the Paraclete, the great Consoler, the Light and Love of heaven, and commanded His Apostles to remain in the city and to prepare their souls for His coming. The Apostles obeyed perfectly, and Jesus kept His promise and rewarded their humble obedience and unanimous fervent prayers by "filling them with the Holy Ghost."

We all have received the Holy Spirit in Baptism and have been strengthened by Him in Confirmation, but none of us is filled with the Holy Ghost. We are not filled with the Holy Spirit, because we are filled too much with the spirit of the world and the spirit of the flesh. We do not receive the fulness of the promise of Jesus, because we do not fully obey God's commands and do not prepare ourselves as the disciples in the cenacle did. May that Spirit of Heavenly Love and Light be with me to-day to enlighten you and to move you that you may spend the days of this week preparing your hearts for a worthy celebration of Pentecost.

THE SWEETNESS OF THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST

Why should our hearts long with an ardent desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Because the fruits of His coming, of His indwelling are so sweet and so great. The very word, fruit, suggests something sweet, something delicious, something nutritious. Sweet is the fruit of the apple-tree. It is that for which the tree was created, for which it was planted, for which God sent rain and sunshine, for which man waits with patient expectation. Sweet is the fruit of the intellect. Man rejoices greatly when after much seeking and studying he sees the truth, or discovers or invents something new. Sweet is the fruit of the human heart. A mother is glad and feels richly rewarded when her son, the object of much pain and care and tears and prayers, returns to her God and to her heart as an Augustine returned to a Monica. How sweet must the fruits of the Holy Spirit be—the Spirit of love dwelling and operating in the human heart!

We all have tasted a little of the sweetness of the fruits of the Spirit. The day on which we gave ourselves most undividedly and entirely to God was our happiest day. When evening came we received and enjoyed a hundred-fold reward. The saints who were so fruitful in good works enjoyed the fruit, their good works, so much that they said: "To serve God means to reign with God." In one of the approved prayers of the Church we say, "Almighty and merciful God, it is because of the greatness of Thy rewards that the faithful serve Thee in such a worthy and wonderful way." It is because the faithful taste the sweet abundant fruit of the service of God that they continue to serve Him and grow in the desire to serve better.

CHARITY

The Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, and the first and really essential fruit of His fulness was charity. They loved their Jesus, they loved their Church, they loved one another. They loved unto death, they loved until death. That love, or rather that act of loving, changed them as fire changes

wood or iron. That act of loving transformed the timid, weak fishermen into fearless Apostles, into heroic marytrs, into glorious princes of the kingdom of God.

St. Paul enumerates the principal fruits of the Holy Spirit in his Epistle to the Galatians: "The fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity" (Gal. v. 22). St. Paul might have mentioned many more and he might have summed them up in one word which is love, the act of loving, which is joyful, which is peaceful, which is patient, which is mild, which is pure.

JOY AND PEACE

The Holy Ghost is love, and the soul that is reborn in Him, animated by Him, filled with Him, loves Jesus. He gives that soul testimony of the goodness of Jesus until that soul loves Jesus with its whole mind and with all its strength. That holy love is sweet, a foretaste of heaven, and makes the soul joyful. Zachary, the blinded father of the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Ghost who gave testimony to him of Jesus, and Zachary rejoiced and sung his "Benedictus," the great canticle of joy. Simeon in the Temple was filled with the Holy Ghost who gave testimony unto him that the poor helpless Infant in his arms was Jesus, his Saviour, and Simeon rejoiced and sang his "Nunc dimittis." Mary, the Blessed Mother, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and her whole inner private life was one great mystery of joy, one great mystery of love, one perpetual "Magnificat." Behold, dear friends, the meaning of the words of St. Paul, the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy; charity, that is, love which gives great joy.

Indeed we need not go back to the days of Christ, to the Holy Bible, the book of God, to see joyful love, the fruit of the Spirit, filling a human soul in this vale of tears. Where to-day do you find souls that are truly, deeply, inwardly joyful? Behold the faces of innocent children kneeling at the Sacred Table to receive Holy Communion or the Sacrament of Confirmation, and see in them the reflection of peaceful love and loving joy. That is the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit

gives testimony unto them of Jesus. Observe the youthful candidates in convent chapels receiving a religious habit or making their religious profession. Seemingly they give up all and receive nothing. The Spirit dwells in their hearts and gives testimony unto them of Jesus. In Him they love Jesus, and that love is joyful and peaceful. We read in history that when the missionaries arrived on our shores, almost three hundred years ago, they knelt down and kissed the ground and exclaimed: "We feel the joy of heaven in our hearts." Whence that joy? It is the fruit of the Spirit that gave testimony unto them that Jesus blessed their sacrifice. The Spirit inflames the heart with love and every act of holy love is joyous and peaceful. Blessed is such a life of love.

No human heart lives without love. If the love of the Holy Spirit does not move it the love of the flesh will consume it. The fruits of that carnal love are bitter. They are "enmities, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions, sects, envies, murders" (Gal. v. 20).

The fruit of the Spirit is like the wheat, and the fruit of the flesh is like the cockle. Pull out the weeds. Mortify yourself. Cultivate the field. Perform spiritual exercises like the disciples that you may not only possess but that you may be filled with the Holy Ghost and that you may enjoy His fruits.

GOODNESS—KINDNESS—MILDNESS—FAITH

Dear friends, when you see the branches of an orange tree weighed down with golden fruit, you call the tree good and you plant it in your garden. Reflect and see the fruit of the Paraclete in the souls of men and then make of your hearts a garden for Him. The Holy Ghost is love and He fills every heart with the love of God and that love of God embraces every child of God—all our neighbors. All the Apostles loved God even as John, well called the disciple of love, and all loved their neighbor as themselves. Charity, the fruit of the Spirit, is good and kind and mild and true. It creates in the soul a willingness and a desire to help and oblige others, a willingness and a desire so great that it cannot rest without actually doing good to others; that it does good in a mild and gentle manner

conquering obstacles and overcoming difficulties; that it finds its joy in doing good at the sacrifice of self; that it is loyal, faithful and free from guile. "Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up" (1 Cor. xiii. 4). Thus wrote the Apostle St. Paul, and these inspired words of his describe the daily work of all apostolic men. Read carefully the twenty-eight chapters of the Acts of the Apostles and notice in them the goodness and the kindness and the mildness and the fidelity of Peter and Paul who "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts x. 38), mighty in their words and mighty in their deeds. They were beaten publicly and they were cast into prison, but the charity which inflamed their hearts urged them on to do good and to suffer more. See the fruits of the Spirit in the parting words of Paul, "For three years I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you night and day . . . I have not coveted any man's silver, gold, or apparel, as you yourselves know, for such things as were needful for me . . . these hands have furnished . . .; it is a more blessed thing to give, rather than to receive" (Acts xx. 31-35). Can we wonder that "there was much weeping among them all," that "falling on the neck of St. Paul they kissed him, being grieved most of all for the word which he had said, that they should see his face no more" (Acts xx. 38). In the preaching and toiling and exhorting and suffering and weeping of Paul they saw and tasted the sweetness of the fruit of the Spirit and they loved Paul, and they loved the Holy Spirit.

PATIENCE—LONGSUFFERING

Great was the blessing of the Jews and Gentiles, who through the kind, mild and faithful ministry of the Apostles received the Spirit; greater was the blessing of the Apostles who, moved by the Spirit, gave these unsearchable riches; "for it is a more blessed thing to give rather than to receive." Their giving was an act of love and acts of love are always joyful. Love, the fruit of the Spirit, made their toils and their tears sweet. They went forth . . . rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. They con-

tinued giving the gifts of God and giving themselves with tears of pain and tears of joy, until they were permitted to give their very lives as sacrifices of love. In their heroic death, the fruits of the Spirit, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, manifested themselves most beautifully. They died like Stephen, the first martyr, who "being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And He said, 'Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God . . . Lord Jesus, receive my spirit . . . Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' and when he had said this he fell asleep in the Lord" (Acts vii. 55, 59).

CHARITY IS CHASTE AND MODEST

Charity, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, is chaste and modest, and chastity and modesty make it great and glorious. "Oh how beautiful is a chaste generation with glory; its memory is immortal for it is known to God and to men" (Wis. iv. 4). St. Paul, solemnly asserting that he has the Holy Spirit and that he is inspired by Him, gives the counsel of virginity and gives his reason for his advice. The virgin mind is free from care and the virgin heart is undivided. "I would have you be without solicitude. He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. . . . The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 32, 34). The virgin soul becomes a most loving soul and her love makes her strong as death, and all that strength is consecrated to works of charity. Her works are great, wonderfully great, and the greatness of her work is doubly beautiful because she is so modest. Her left hand does not know what her right hand does. When her work is ended she calls herself a useless servant of the Lord.

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHURCH TO-DAY

The Holy Spirit who filled the Apostles remained with us and fills the Church to-day. Many to-day are so worldly and

materialistic that they fail to see the fruits of the Spirit while enjoying the benefits and blessings of them. When a great millionaire gives a million and advertises it in all the papers, keeping ninety-nine millions for himself, we call it charity and admire its greatness. When some institution erects magnificent material buildings, we consider it successful and evidently blessed by God; when a school sends forth into the world scholars that advance rapidly in acquiring the goods and the honors of the world, we judge it to be filled with a wonderful spirit. All such things the pagans have done and the pagans can do to-day. Christ did not say: all men shall know that you are My disciples "by the fact that you manage the banks and control the governments and honor the highest circles of society"; but "by this, that you love one another." Love—kind, mild, patient and enduring, is the distinctive mark of the Spirit of Christ. Christ and His disciples gave not money or worldly wisdom, they gave the Gospel of peace—they gave themselves.

Behold our Church to-day in a spiritually enlightened manner, and rejoice at the greatness of the goodness, the patience, the mildness, the modesty, and love of all the fruits of the Spirit. Everywhere thousands of young men and women, led by the light and moved by the love of the Holy Ghost, leave the world, sacrifice all the world loves, enter a convent, prostrate themselves before the Blessed Sacrament, vow poverty, chastity and obedience to the unseen Lord, and spend their time, their talents, their strength, their lives performing the most heroic works of mercy and charity, seeking no other reward but Jesus, whom they love and the love of whom makes their duties, naturally difficult and often repulsive, joyful and peaceful. The Holy Ghost is in them and the Holy Ghost gives testimony unto every one of them that Jesus, for whom they work, with whom they work, through whom they work, is in them.

CONCLUSION

Christian friends, reflect and get a glimpse of the charming qualities of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and then love the

Spirit. If there is a longing and a desire in your hearts to spend your few and uncertain years "doing good" like the Apostles, if you wish to die like a St. Stephen, then invoke the Spirit that He may come and create in you these virtues.

The Apostles, disciples, and holy women spent their days of preparation for the coming of the Paraclete with the Blessed Mother. Honor the Blessed "woman, clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The twelve stars may be the twelve fruits of the Spirit. On no other human brow did they ever shine so brightly as on hers. Mary loved Jesus, enjoyed possessing Jesus, and possessed Him in peace in Nazareth. Mary felt goodness. It made her hasten to Elizabeth; and how kindly, how mildly! Mary suffered with Jesus—hers was longsuffering with patience and fidelity. Modesty and purity make all her works shine with a heavenly splendor.

Mother of God, pray for us and obtain for us the fruits of the Paraclete; crown us, your children, with the crown of twelve stars.

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AUTHOR
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